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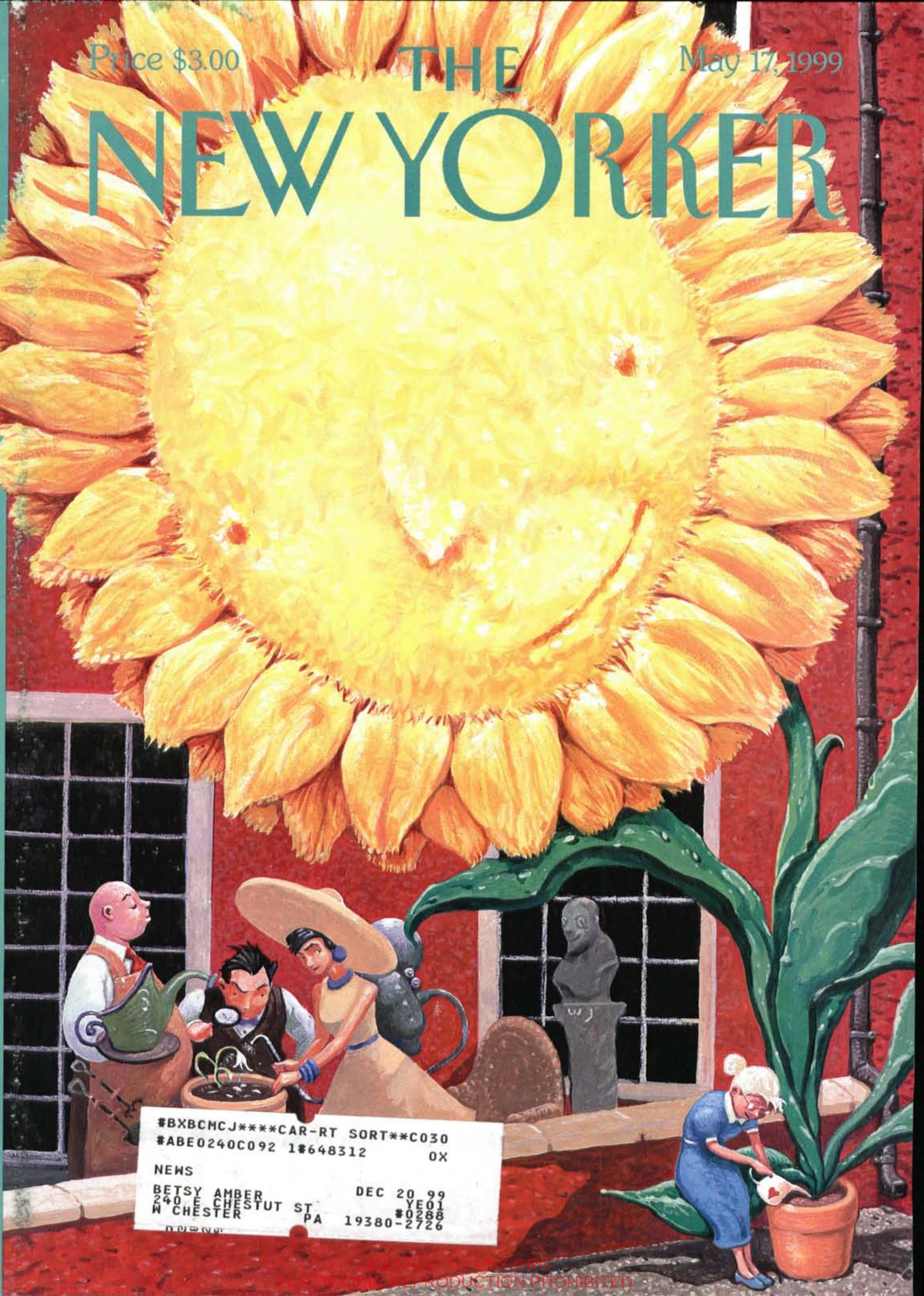
THE NEW YORKER

May 17, 1999



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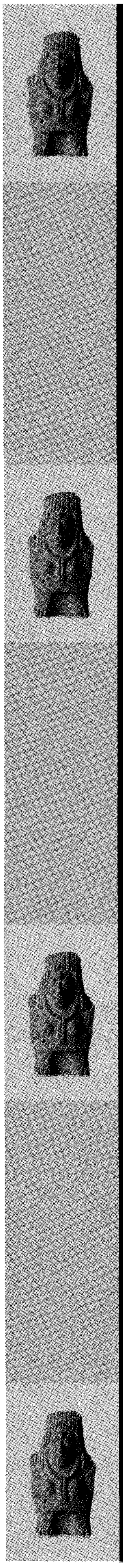

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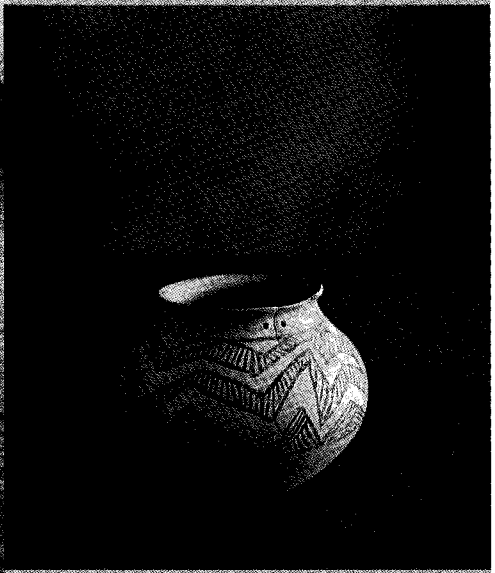

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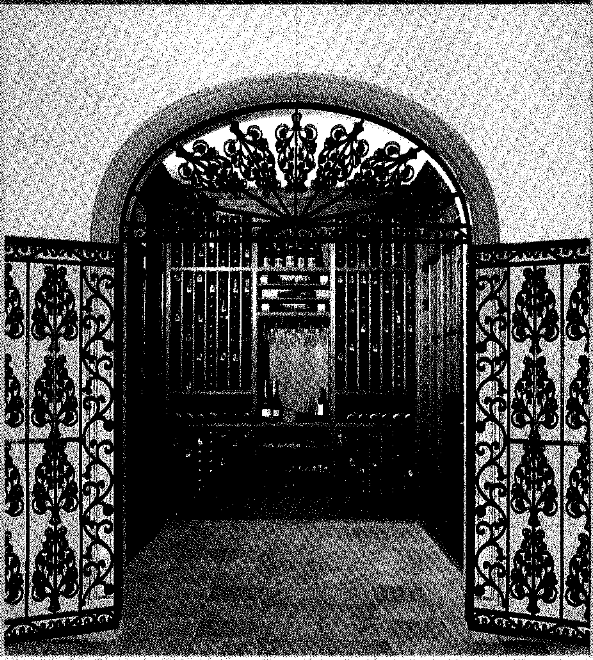

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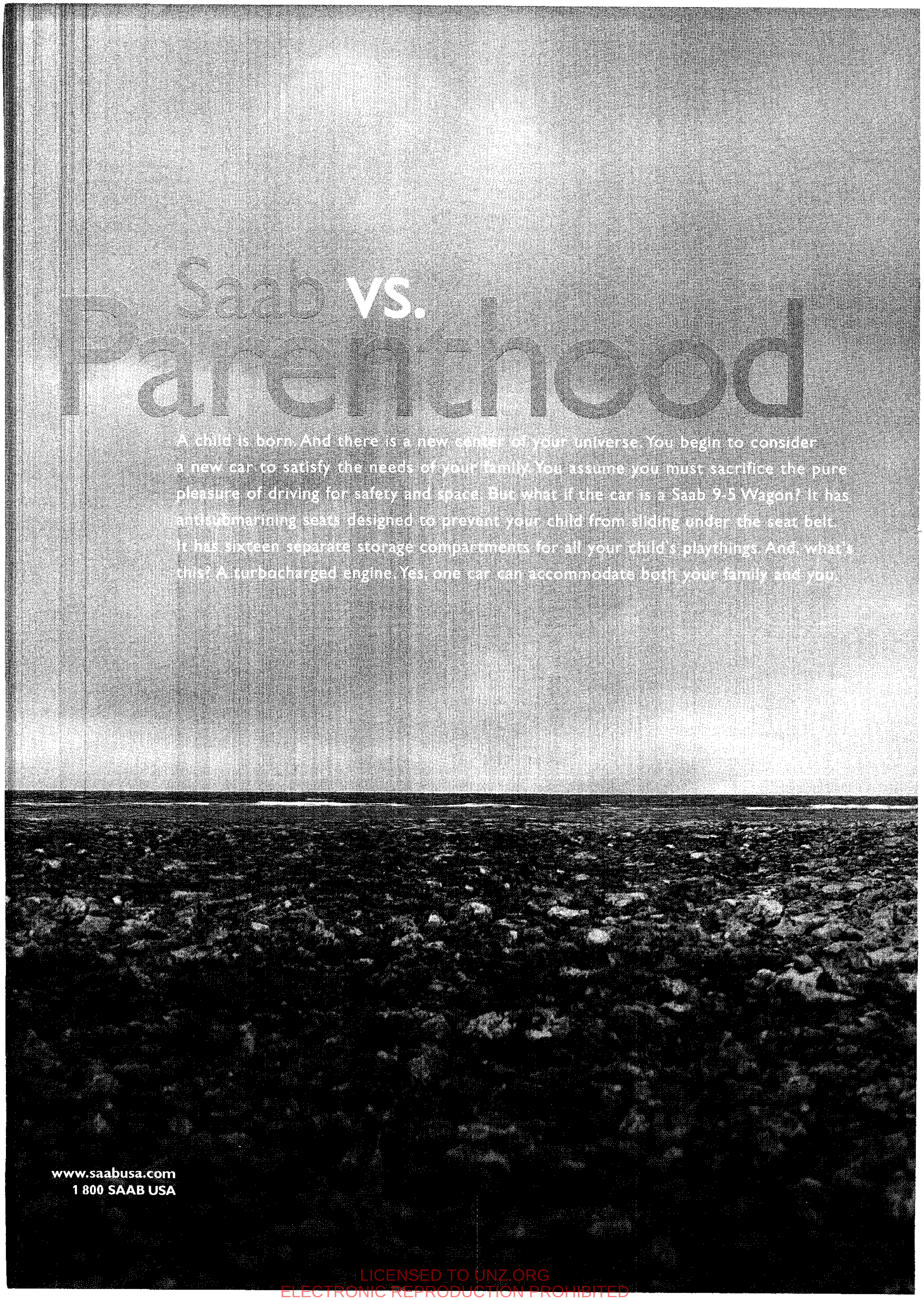Saab vs.
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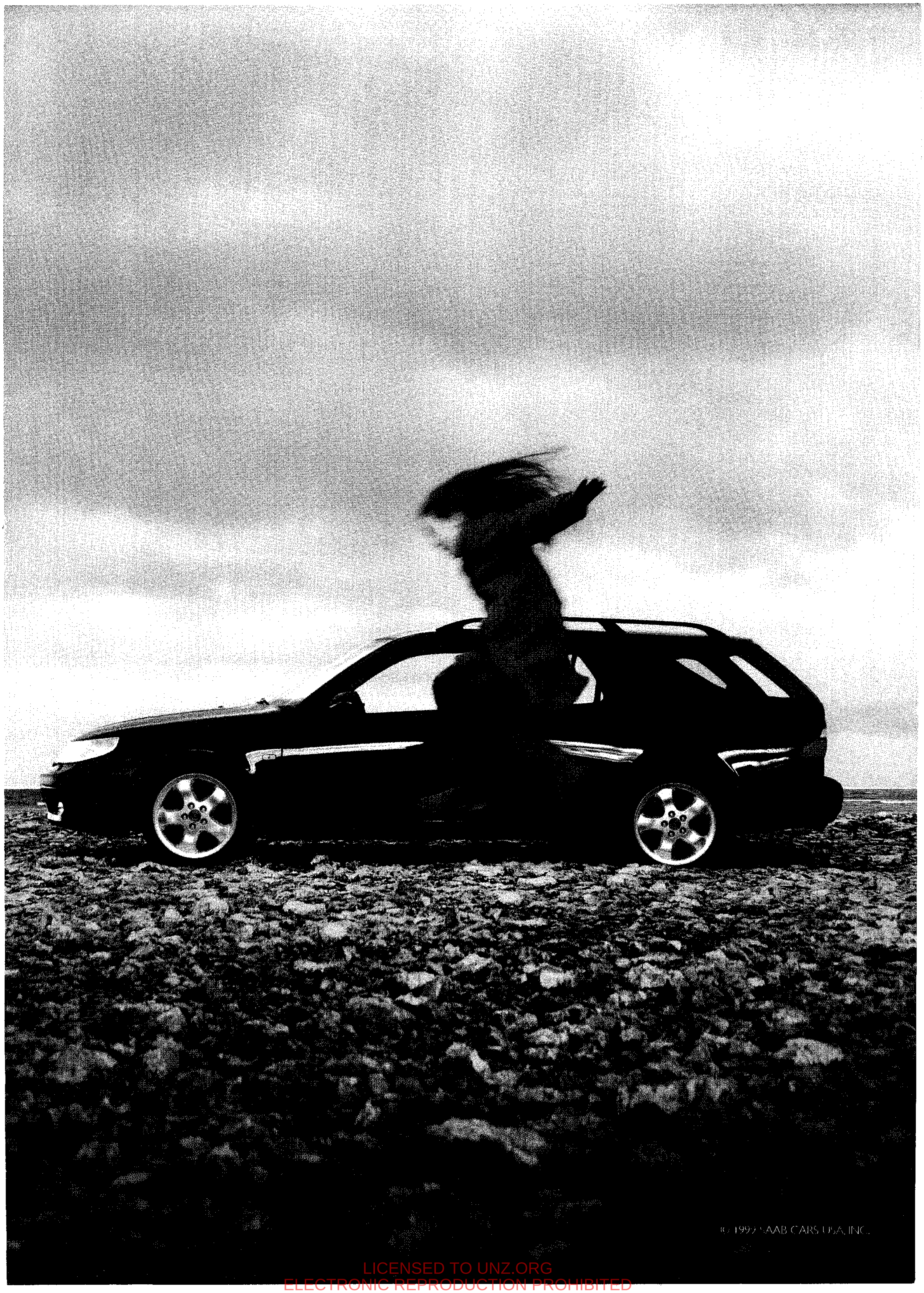

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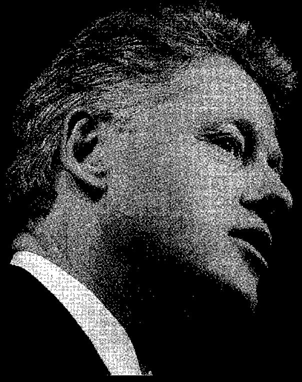

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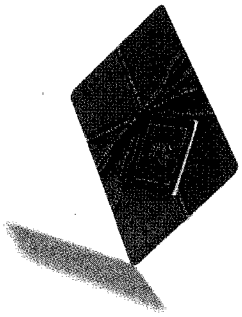

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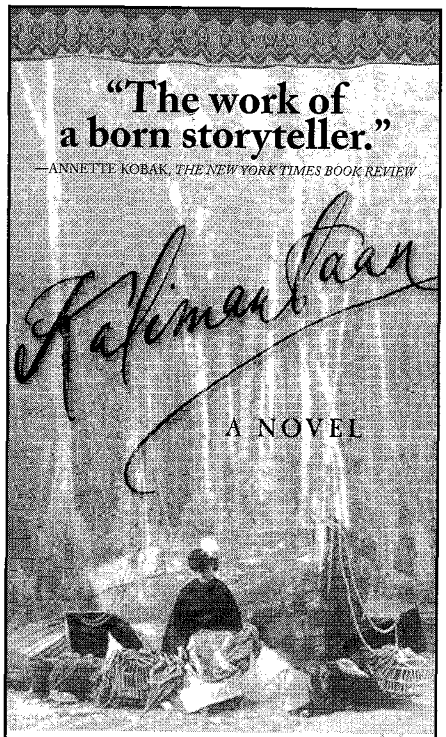

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ELIZABETH RUBIN ("Editor in Exile," p. 46) recently won a Livingston Award for her Letter from Uganda, which appeared in these pages last year.

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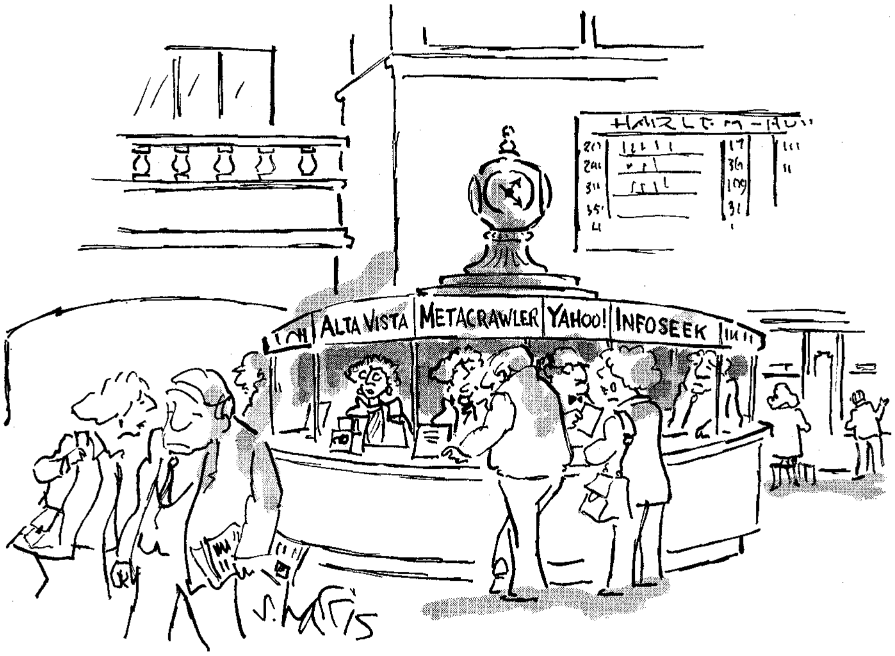
ROZ CHAST (The Back Page, p. 100) has published several collections of her cartoons and four children's books. ♦



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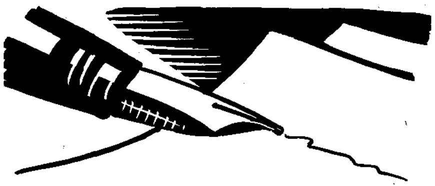

LONG-SUFFERING PATIENTS

As cardiologists who are involved with research and the clinical care of patients with heart disease, we were extremely disquieted to read Joseph Epstein's poignant account of his bypass surgery (Personal History, April 12th). On the advice of several doctors, Epstein underwent a strenuous operation whose risks may well have exceeded those presented by his "silent ischemia." Without having examined him, we cannot say whether his surgery was necessary or not, but our experience and research, and those of others, demonstrate that a very significant percentage of patients undergoing bypass surgery and angioplasty—perhaps as many as two-thirds—can safely defer or altogether forgo these procedures by managing their heart problems with medication. Regrettably, much of the rush to invasive procedures is driven by nonmedical factors—principally, economic ones. We believe that the modern medical model has become increasingly reductionist: human beings are seen as repositories of malfunctioning organs that need repair. This view results in an onslaught of tests and assaultive procedures that purport to give definitive answers in a field fraught with uncertainty. Doctors often take refuge behind technology because it is easier and less time-consuming than talking with a complex human being who is their patient.

BERNARD LOWN, M.D.
Chairman, Lown Cardiovascular Research Foundation
THOMAS B. GRABOYS, M.D.
Associate Clinical Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School
Boston, Mass.

SPIRITUAL REWARDS

Reading about the radio preacher J. Charles Jessup ("Miracle Man," by Peter J. Boyer, April 12th) brought back memories of my college years at Southern Nazarene University, just outside Oklahoma City. I was on a Gospel Team that travelled throughout Oklahoma, Kansas, and Texas. I stayed in dozens of homes and heard over and over again about the preachers on Del Rio radio. I was shown prayer handkerchiefs, Holy Land water, sand, and olivewood that produced miracles when they were placed on a sick body or on a wayward child's clothes. What struck me, though, was not the preachers but the listeners. They supported any preacher who offered hope through miracles. Jessup was one of the best. The little gifts he gave were represented in most of the collections I saw, and most of those listeners felt that they received much more from Jessup than they ever gave to him.

JIM CHRISTY
Senior Pastor, Sunny View Nazarene Church
Greeley, Colo.

WHAT CAUSED COLUMBINE?

Philip Gourevitch (Comment, May 10th) concludes that guns are the essential issue facing us after the Columbine massacre. The problem is more complex than that. The majority often rules with intolerance. The nasty form of intolerance practiced by the Columbine jocks pales in comparison with that posted by the killer Eric Harris on his Web site, but, rather than drawing parallels to André Gide, Gourevitch should have been rereading "Lord of the Flies," which illustrates that the underlying motivation—always—is power and control. Harris and Dylan Klebold were in control of their school for a little while. They granted themselves an insane and deadly wish, and it is not hard to imagine that they died satisfied. It is too easy to complain about the sale of guns without addressing how someone like Eric Harris becomes convinced that he needs one. Any society that intimidates and excludes members of its population, and then gleefully sells them guns, is asking for trouble.

PAUL ALLMAN
New York City

•

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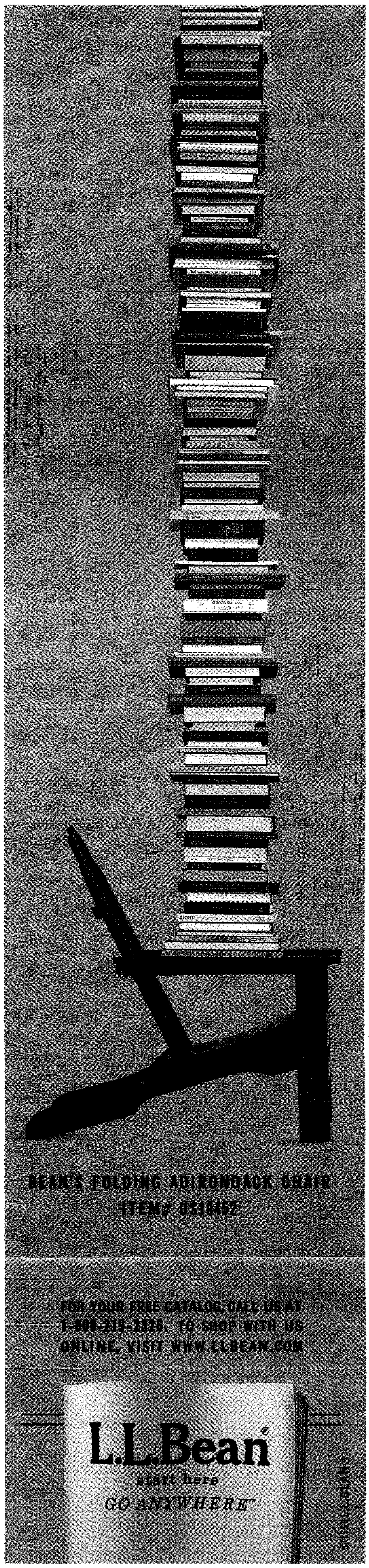
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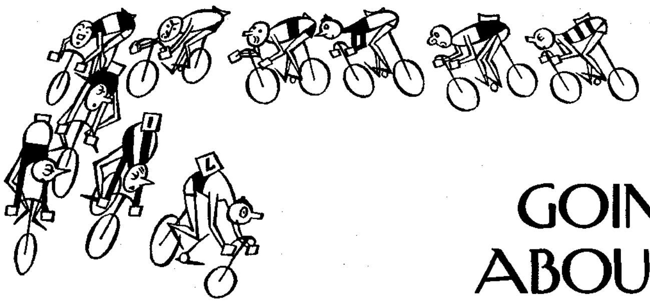

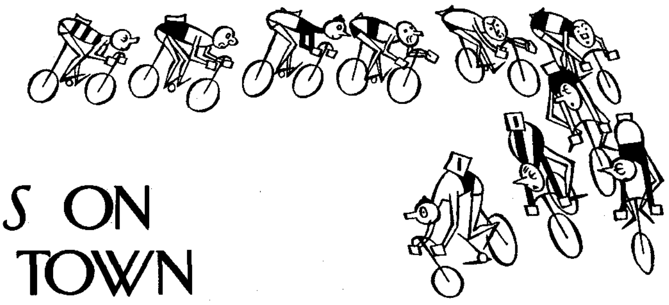

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

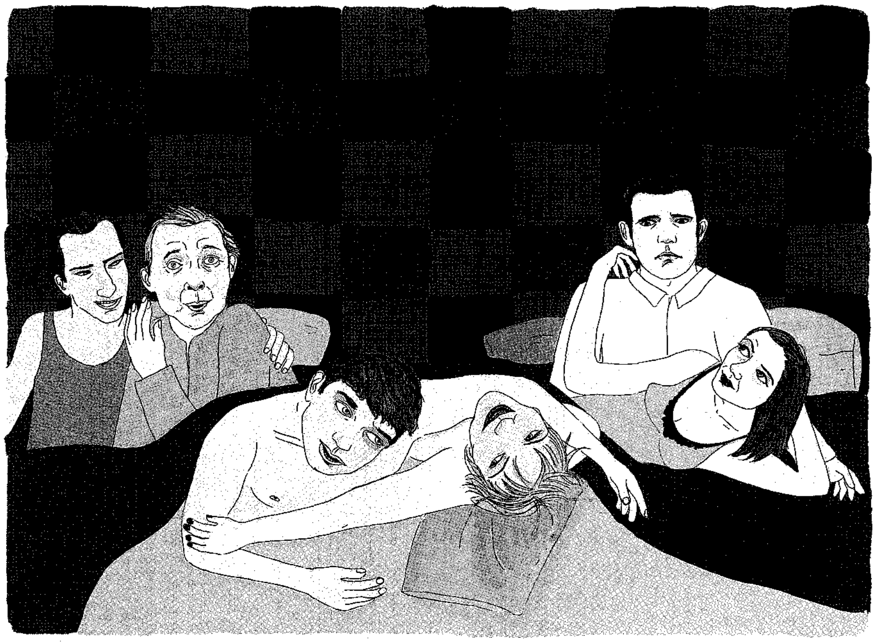
The Drama Dept.—Presenting an evening of one-acts, by Richard Greenberg ("The Author's Voice") and Peter Hedges ("Imagining Brad"), directed by Evan Yionoulis. In previews. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. 541-8441.)

East Is East—The children of a Pakistani mother and an English father are torn between cultures, in a drama by Ayub Khan-Din. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Ensemble Studio Theatre—The first series in this year's six-week marathon of one-acts runs through May 16, with plays by Leslie Ayvazian, Romulus Linney, Cassandra Medley, and Cherie Vogelstein. The marathon continues through June 13. (549 W. 52nd St. 247-4982.)

Goodnight Children Everywhere—Richard Nelson's drama is set in London and concerns the reunion of three siblings separated during the Second World War. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Hurrah at Last—In Richard Greenberg's most recent play, a writer (Peter Frechette) is tortured by his family and his finances. A Roundabout staging. Previews begin May 13. (Gramercy Theatre, 127 E. 23rd St. 719-1300.)



"Things You Shouldn't Say Past Midnight," by Peter Ackerman, at the Promenade.

LARA TOMLIN

Things You Shouldn't Say Past Midnight—A comedy by first-time playwright Peter Ackerman, set in the bedrooms of three Manhattan couples. Preview on May 12. Opens May 13 at 8. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

This Lime Tree Bower—Primary Stages presents a drama about a trio of boozers involved in a heist, by the Irish playwright Conor McPherson. In previews. (354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Amy's View—Dame Judi Dench is an amazing actress, but can she keep you in your seat for the duration of another one of David Hare's pompous plays? (Just barely.) This one claims to be about the tangled relationship between an actress from theatre's golden age and her modern daughter, who marries an arbiter of pop culture, but it's really about Hare's out-of-touch ideas regarding how today's audiences view theatre—meaning him. Directed by Richard Eyre. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

Angel Street—Patrick Hamilton's 1938 thriller, on which the film "Gaslight" was based. (Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802. Closes May 23.)

Annie Get Your Gun—A terrific revival of Irving Berlin's solid-gold score. It's played for romance and sass, which the vulnerable and charming Bernadette Peters and the hunky, easygoing Tom Wopat deliver in spades. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

Beautiful Thing—Jonathan Harvey's 1993 drama, set in London, about two working-class boys who fall in love. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.)

The Cider House Rules, Part I: Here in St. Cloud's—Peter Parnell's adaptation of the John Irving novel. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

The Civil War—The musical. Frank Wildhorn wrote the music and book. Jerry Zaks is the director. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Closer—Patrick Marber's slick dissection of the anatomy of desire follows four characters (Natasha Richardson, Anna Friel, Ciaran Hinds, and Rupert Graves) as they meet, mate, and move on in a kind of algebra of solitude which is factored out before our eyes. Marber can be very funny, and his writing is tight and well paced, but his staging is not. (4/5/99) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

A Couple of Blaguards—Malachy McCourt and Mickey Kelly perform Mr. McCourt's two-man autobiographical show, which he co-wrote with his brother Frank. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

Death of a Salesman—The casting of this production of Arthur Miller's masterpiece is generally uneven, but the show still packs a wallop. Brian Dennehy is almost too strong and too solid in himself for the panic-stricken salesman, yet he makes Willy Loman's crazy competitiveness and his misguided love for his son Biff hurt like a punch to the heart. Elizabeth Franz turns in the most fully realized performance, as Willy's beleaguered wife. She is as thin as Dennehy is large, yet she grounds the play and gives it a strong, almost stoic emotional center. (3/8/99) (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

Dreaming in Cuban—An evening of two solo acts, performed in a Cuban-café setting. In "Dreaming in Cuban," adapted from the novel by Cristina Garcia, Eileen Galindo portrays three women whose political differences (pro- and anti-Fidel) and accents (Spanish and Brooklyn) reveal the cultural effects New York has on a family transplanted from Havana. Galindo is transfixing, but she deserves a tighter monologue. Michael John Garcés wrote and performs the second piece, "Agua Ardiente," and though he tells a slighter story than Galindo he shares her ability to engage. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200. Closes May 16.)

Far East—A. R. Gurney's drama, set during the Korean War. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Footloose—A musical adaptation of the 1984 film. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

Fosse—This steamy revue of works by the choreographer Bob Fosse doesn't reveal anything new about the man behind the dances, but it does remind us why we won't be forgetting him anytime soon. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

The Gershwins' Fascinating Rhythm—A revue celebrating the songs of George and Ira Gershwin. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

The Gimmick—Dael Orlandersmith performs her new solo play, about two outcast kids who dream of ways to escape their lives in East Harlem. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)

The Iceman Cometh—Let's face it: Eugene O'Neill's despairing, four-and-a-half-hour drama about a barroom full of losers is no day at the beach. In this age of movies and television—when you can get a neat package containing a comfortable range of human emotions, a few murders, hot sex, and a happy ending and still have time for dinner—most people would rather get the "Iceman" Cliffs Notes, if they want to bother at all. For those who still care, though, this

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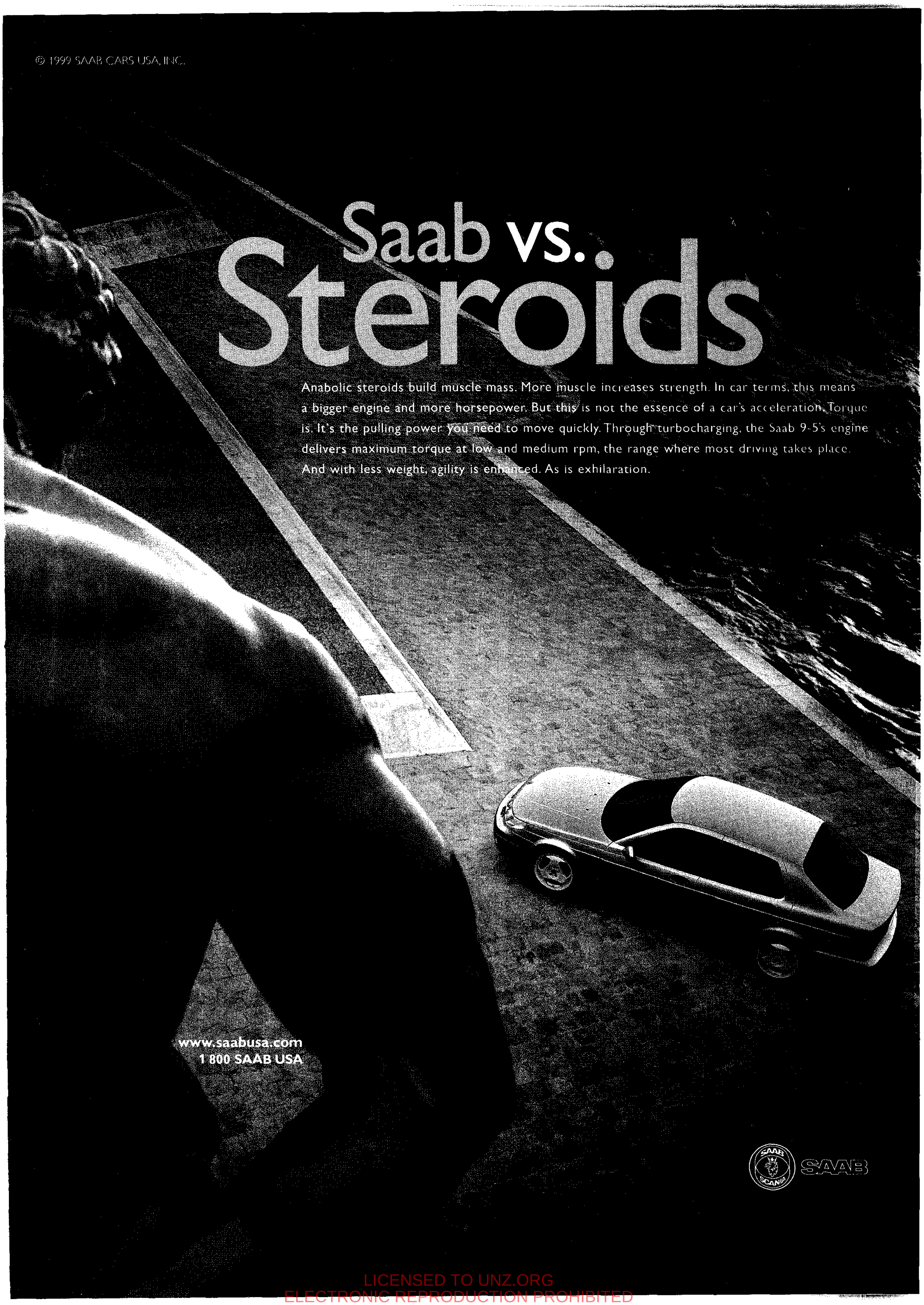

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beautiful production is a rare opportunity to see a fully realized production of a masterpiece by America's first great playwright. It has countless rewards, not the least of which is an outstanding ensemble cast that Kevin Spacey, in a brilliant performance as the crazily optimistic salesman Hickey, leads in a way that lights up all the other performances rather than overshadowing them. Howard Davies is the director. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

It Ain't Nothin' But the Blues—A marvellous collection of songs—ranging from traditional African chants and spirituals to Appalachian folk, country, traditional and modern blues, and pop—performed by a dynamic cast, in what turns out to be an oddly didactic cabaret act. The music alone could have showcased the influence of the blues, but instead the audience is subjected to explanatory notes ("Strange Fruit" is about a bad time in Mississippi's past, for example) and bad-talk-show banter, and the result is something like a shopping-mall version of "Bring in Da Noise, Bring in Da Funk." Fortunately, the blues triumphantly survives even this. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

The Joy Luck Club—Susan Kim's adaptation of the Amy Tan novel, staged by the Pan Asian Rep. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200. Closes May 15.)

Lake Hollywood—The Signature Theatre Company wraps up its John Guare season with a new work by the playwright. (555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529. Closes May 23.)

The Lion in Winter—The late James Goldman's 1966 version of the royal quarrels of Eleanor of Aquitaine and Henry II, turned into a bourgeois family squabble, makes a solid high-camp vehicle for Stockard Channing and Laurence Fishburne. A well-managed waste of time. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300. Closes May 23.)

Lips—Constance Congdon's new play is practically a miracle: a political satire that is funny and leaves its audience with something substantive to think about, without being preachy. A lame-duck female President, who is happily married and straight, decides to take on the religious right by falsely coming out as a lesbian, which she does with the help of a too-loyal aide and a paroled computer criminal who really is a lesbian. The actors are uniformly sharp, and Greg Leaming's direction is clean and fast. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

The Lonesome West—Two battling Irish brothers duke it out in Leenane, in a black comedy by Martin McDonagh. Directed by Garry Hynes. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Marlene—Siân Phillips portrays Marlene Dietrich, in a musical play by Pam Gems. Directed by Sean Mathias. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

The Mineola Twins—Before the curtain goes up on Paula Vogel's satire on women's roles (how they have changed and how they have stayed the same over the past forty years), Doris Day songs are played in the theatre and an enormous image of a torpedo bra stares out at the audience—and that's as subtle and fresh as this work gets. (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300. Closes May 23.)

Much Ado About Nothing—The Irondale Ensemble's version of Shakespeare's comedy, set in 1876 at a Great Plains cavalry post. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 254-1109.)

Night Must Fall—The main problem with this National Actors Theatre production of Emlyn Williams's 1935 thriller is that the play was probably never that thrilling to begin with, and it certainly isn't thrilling in 1999. Big house, rich old lady in a wheelchair, charming stranger? *Please.* (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Not About Nightingales—The first play that Thomas Lanier Williams signed "Tennessee," successfully resuscitated by the Royal National Theatre. It's clearly the work of a tenderfoot, yet the choreographic panache of Trevor Nunn's production invests the script with a poetic stylishness the prose lacks. (3/8/99) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

Peter Pan—The former Olympic gymnast Cathy Rigby is back in town to star in a limited engagement of the 1954 musical. (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

Ring Round the Moon—Lincoln Center Theatre presents Christopher Fry's 1950 adaptation of Anouilh's comedy "L'Invitation au Château." Gerald Gutierrez is the director. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Rose McClendon: Harlem's Gift to Broadway—Vinie Burrows wrote and stars in this one-woman show about the celebrated black actress. (Henry Street Settlement, 466 Grand St. 279-4200.)

The Shadow of a Gunman—Sean O'Casey learned a lot about subtlety and balance between 1923, when the Abbey Theatre produced this play, and the next year, when he wrote "Juno and the Paycock." Both are explorations of the Irish Civil War, but in this show there's too much farce, too broadly written, to justify the final tragedy. Nonetheless, it has some brilliant passages, and the fine Irish Rep company, led by Declan Mooney and with a delightful performance by Aedin Maloney, as a Republican sympathizer, makes the evening fun. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes May 30.)

Snakebit—Two guys, a gal, and an AIDS test. With all the one-liners and dialogue cued by contemporary culture, this comedy-drama by the actor and first-time playwright David Marshall Grant, like a lot of new plays, seems like a sitcom rewritten for the stage (fewer jokes, more "issues"). The cast, though, is topnotch. (Century Theatre, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

The 2.5 Minute Ride—The comic actress Lisa Kron gets it: unless a personal story resonates with humanity, it alienates. In her solo show, a tale of her trip to Auschwitz with her father (who survived the Holocaust but whose parents did not), which is offset by extremely funny memories of her family's regular trips to an Ohio amusement park, Kron pulls off the impossible: she makes you feel something like compassion for a Nazi her father interrogated after the war; you still hate him, but he almost seems human. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

Via Dolorosa—Because David Hare's lively monologue about his first trip to Israel is about Israelis and Arabs, he sees this work as activism; the advertisements for the show refer to it as a "play." In fact, it is neither. It is a somewhat overproduced ninety-minute after-dinner speech that sheds no new light on the conflict. (3/29/99) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Weir—Conor McPherson's play takes place in the musty chill of a backwater Irish pub, where a handful of habitués chew the cud of their solitude, spinning ghostly yarns that fill the air with glimmers of fear and resignation. It's a gentle, well-written series of anecdotes, and it has a bittersweet charm, but for all the well-crafted talk and the well-observed bonhomie, it is finally a shaggy-bog story. (4/12/99) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown—A nothing burger for audiences of all ages. (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

LONG RUNS

ART: Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CABARET:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broad-

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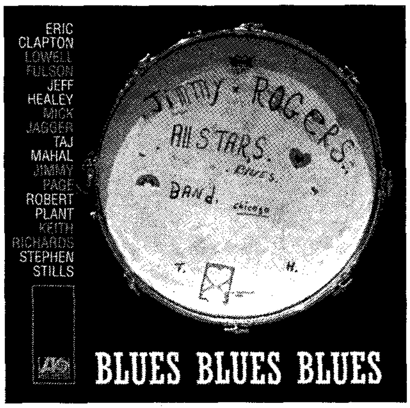

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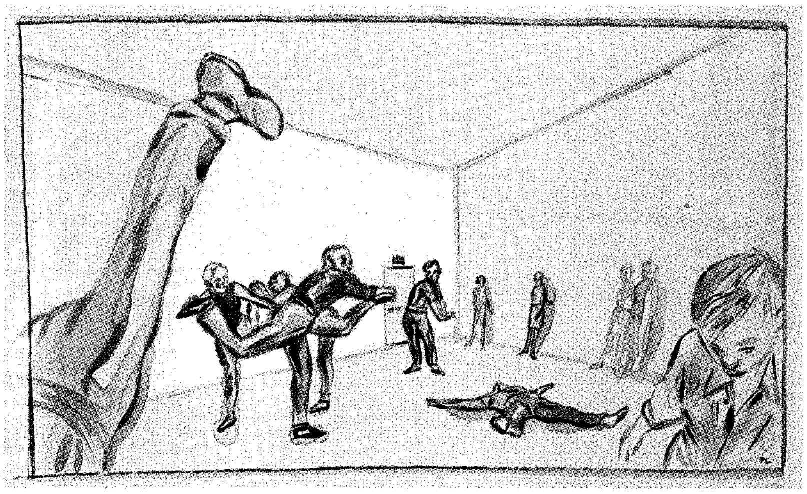
way at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **DE LA GUARDA:** Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH:** Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **JEKYLL & HYDE:** Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **KILLER JOE:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200. . . . **LATE-NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LION KING:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **THE MYSTERY OF IRMA VEP:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS:** John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RAGTIME:** Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. (Closes May 30.) . . . **SECRETS EVERY SMART TRAVELER SHOULD KNOW:** Ibis, 327 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **SIDE MAN:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **THE SOUND OF MUSIC:** Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE:** HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **WIT:** Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.



Douglas Dunn re-creates "Lazy Madge," for Danspace Project's Silver Series.

PIER CONSAGRA

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET—May 12 at 8: "Apollo," "The Cage," "Duo Concertant," and "Jeu de Cartes." . . . ¶ May 13 at 8: A suite from "L'Histoire du Soldat," "Orpheus," "Norwegian Moods," and "Symphony in Three Movements." . . . ¶ May 14 at 8: "Monumentum pro Gesualdo/Movements for Piano and Orchestra," "Norwegian Moods," "Les Noces," and "Jeu de Cartes." . . . ¶ May 15 at 2: "Agon," a suite from "L'Histoire du Soldat," and "Symphony in Three Movements." . . . ¶ May 15 at 8: A suite from "L'Histoire du Soldat," "Les Noces," and "Symphony in Three Movements." . . . ¶ May 16 at 3: "Apollo," "The Cage," "Norwegian Moods," and "Firebird." . . . ¶ May 18 at 8: "Danses Concertantes," "Les Noces," and "Jeu de Cartes." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through June 27.)

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE—May 12 at 2 and 8 and May 13 at 8: "Romeo and Juliet." . . . ¶ May 14 and May 17-18 at 8 and May 15 at 2 and 8: "La Bayadère." (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000. Through June 19.)

LES BALLETS DE MONTE CARLO—In "Romeo et Juliette," the choreographer Jean-Christophe Maillot's version set to the Prokofiev score, the focus is on Juliette and her turbulent adolescence; the nurse, Lady Capulet, and Friar Lawrence have expanded roles. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. May 12-14 at 8, May 15 at 2 and 8, and May 16 at 3.)

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Bebe Miller Company—The nine-member troupe appears in "Going to the Wall," a meditation on cultural identity set to a score by Don Byron. Miller performs in the première of "Rhythm Studies," her first solo in a decade. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. May 11 at 7, May 12-14 at 8, May 15 at 2 and 8, and May 16 at 2 and 7:30.)

"Live Communication"—Savion Glover and fellow-tappers Ayodele Casel, Abron Glover, Jason Samuels, and Omar Edwards perform with an onstage quartet and a host of surprise guests who show up nightly to join in the big jam-session finales. (Variety Arts Theatre, 110 Third Ave., at 13th St. 239-6200. May 10-14 and May 17-18 at 8 and May 15 at 6 and 10. Through May 22.)

"Silver Series/Global Exchange"—Danspace Project continues its twenty-fifth-anniversary series with "Lazy Madge," choreographed by Douglas Dunn. The 1976-77 work is something of a time capsule of its era, when, as Dunn says, everyone wanted to cram "regular old life into dance." When he first presented the work, he couldn't pay his troupe—but they *could* come to rehearse whenever they wanted: if two people showed, he'd make a duet, three meant a trio, etc. In performance, dancers chose spontaneously from the choreography they'd learned—facing whichever way they wanted. "So there was a rigor I liked in the steps, and at the same time there was spontaneous movement from a large group. And it never became stable. The relationships would shift with each performance." Dunn performs this work with a blend of young and veteran talent. Cristina Caprioli, from the original cast, also presents excerpts from her work "Friday." (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. May 13-16 at 8:30.)

"Madison as I Imagine It"—The choreographer John Jasperse's latest evening-length work is not, he says, concerned with the darker side of touching—power and manipulation. Instead, the four dancers try out softer, fragile, intertwining movements in a piece about an imaginary and nearly utopian (if sometimes dysfunctional) community. "You see four people trying to fuse until you can't even tell which body part belongs to who," he says. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. May 11-16 at 8.)

Pearl Lang Dance Theatre—The twenty-two-member company presents two premières ("Jacob and the Angel" and "Song of Azerbaijan") and two repertory works ("Korus" and "A Bouquet of Love Song Waltzes"). (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. May 14-15 at 8 and May 16 at 3.)

"Dance Sampler"—In a five-hour showcase, twenty companies and soloists, including Ronald K. Brown/Evidence, Ann Carlson, Sara Rudner, Seán Curran, Doug Varone and Dancers, and David Dorfman Dance, offer a single work each. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. May 15 at 6.)

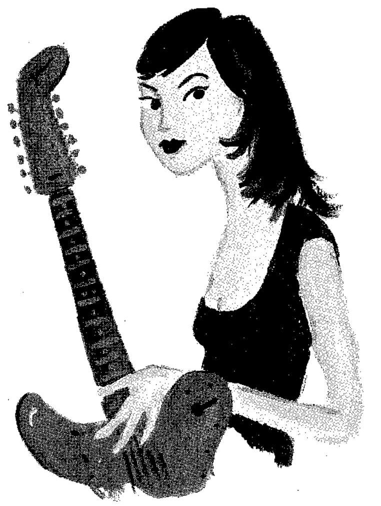
NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Loretta Lynn—Long before Shania Twain, there was the Coal Miner's Daughter. The queen of country music (whose appearances have become increasingly rare) delivers a master class in the old-fashioned sounds of Nashville. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. May 13 at 8.)

Tito Puente and His Latin Jazz Ensemble—The timbales king was there when Latin music gained a foothold on the American consciousness back in the late forties, he stuck by it through the lean years, and, with the music's resurgence, he's still here, whipping dancers into a frenzy and driving concert audiences into the aisles to boogie. He's got additional heavy artillery in the form of guest soloists Frank Wess, the formidable saxophonist, flutist, and Count Basie band veteran, and Ray Bryant, a mighty pianist who resides on the corner where jazz meets the deep blues. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 346-1715. May 13 at 8.)

Jazz at Lincoln Center—If Wynton Marsalis and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra don't put their all into the music of Duke Ellington this centenary year, they never will. The former wunderkind is finally backing up his public veneration for the maestro with great work—the L.C.J.O.'s recent Duke tribute, "Live in Swing City," is ample proof. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. May 13 and 15 at 8.)



PUNK PIAF: *April March (née Elinor Blake), a young American singer gone Francophone, got her start a decade ago in New York City garage bands; her early records sound as if they were emanating from the radio of a Citröen 2CV. They were perfect punk tributes to both the desperate sixties French pop known as yé-yé—its best-known exponent was Françoise Hardy—and the smarter, darker romantic threats of Serge Gainsbourg. March comes into Maxwell's on May 12 with songs from her new album, "Chrominance Decoder" (produced by Bertrand Burgalat, the man who helped the Gallic band Air create the sexiest disk of 1998). It's March's richest, most mature work yet, full of songs in which love isn't all it's cracked up to be. "Knee Socks," an anthem for budding Lolitas, quickly turns bitter; in the devastating "Sugar," a jeune fille is deflowered in the woods by a man who has dirty fingernails. March keeps her voice deliberately small—all the better to reveal schoolgirl secrets. In "No Parachute," she taunts, "She's gonna drop you. / It'll be cute!"*

Oliver Lake Quartet—In a concert of works recorded by Eric Dolphy. This isn't the first time that the estimable saxophonist Lake has been explicit about his admiration for the iconic jazzman Dolphy—1980's "Prophet" found Lake interpreting the jagged compositions of the great saxophonist, bass clarinettist, and flute player. You can hear Dolphy's influence throughout Lake's playing, in the loop-the-loop phrasing, blunt attacks, and sharp rhythms. Most influential, however, may be the radical conservatism of Dolphy's late work: the high-wire walk between free jazz and standard jazz. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. 346-8510. May 15 at 8.)

Hole—After a burning affair with Hollywood, Courtney Love has fallen on hard times: her band's last record, the underrated "Celebrity Skin," failed to galvanize the masses; her last movie, "200 Cigarettes," failed at the box office. She endured insults from Marilyn Manson and his fans (Hole recently vacated an ill-conceived double bill with the androgynous rocker). Even yoga hasn't mellowed her (she screamed at a reporter in a recent let's-exercise-with-Courtney feature in *Vogue*). Still, Courtney soldiers on. With Imperial Teen. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. May 18-19 at 8.)

CLUBS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—May 14: **BUSTER POINDEXTER** gives the Banshees of Blue a rest and revs up his Spanish Rocketship Band. May 15: **GRAHAM PARKER.** Over the past twenty-three years, this acerbic graduate of England's pub-rock scene has released albums for six different record companies—and left all of them in a snit. His recent association with the little indie label Razor & Tie has been less tense. And don't accuse the still angry, not so young man of living in the past: while his latest release, "Loose Monkeys," is a collection of outtakes and alternative cuts, it's available only over the Internet. With **TOM FREUND.**

Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—May 15: **THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS.** It's been more than a decade since John Flansburgh and John Linnell began performing their trademark jerky little pop songs full of surreal humor, and their appeal hasn't waned. May 17: Local rappers **THE ARSONISTS** and **NON-PHIXION.**

Coney Island High, 15 St. Marks Pl. (674-7959)—May 16: The **BOX TOPS.** Back in 1967, Memphis Central High sophomore Alex Chilton walked into American Studios with a local garage band he had just joined and cut "The Letter"; the sixteen-year-old's gravelly voice propelled the tune to No. 1. The Tops cranked out four albums of irresistible bubble-gum soul, including a few more chart hits, and then Chilton left to help form Big Star; he eventually became a cult figure of American underground pop. Expect more Gen Xers than you've ever seen at an oldies show.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—Best known as Sweet Baby James's older brother, **LIVINGSTON TAYLOR** (May 15) brings his own bagful of lovely folk tunes, which he then leavens with an acerbic sense of humor. If you find James Taylor too sweet, this is your man. The **MINGUS BIG BAND** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—May 14: **TOOTS AND THE MAYTALS.** If Bob Marley and the Wailers were the heart of reggae, then Frederick (Toots) Hibbert and his Maytals must surely be its soul: it was the group's 1968 hit, "Do the Reggay," that gave ska, dub, rock steady, and every other substratum of Jamaican music one all-encompassing name. May 18: **MOTÖRHEAD.** Hair metal and spandex pants may be headed toward the Smithsonian, but the original head-banging, umlauted outfit roars on.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—May 12: **VERA BILA AND KALE**, a Gypsy band from a small town outside Prague. May 15: The dreamy pop of **LADYBUG TRANSISTOR.**

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—May 12: **APRIL MARCH.**

Tonic, 107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—May 16: **REBECCA GATES**, the guitarist half of the Spinanes.

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—**TRANS AM** (May 15) is from Washington, D.C., and the instrumental music it creates is as ambitious and involved as an omnibus spending

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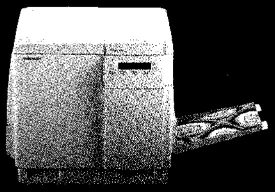

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bill. The trio experiments with rock instrumentation, electronic beats, found sounds (such as noise from a D.C. train station), and lots and lots of keyboard effects. Its fourth album, "Futureworld," is the first to include vocals, but they've been distorted to the point where they sound like—what else?—keyboards. Listen hard, though, and you'll make out the line "all alone in the future world" on the album's title track. With **PAN SONIC.** May 16: An evening of zydeco dancing with **JOHN WILSON AND THE HOUSE ROCKERS.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—May 13-15: The **AL FOSTER** quintet and the **JAVON JACKSON** trio. When it comes to Miles Davis's hot-shot sidemen, the name Al Foster doesn't spring to mind, but this superb post-bop drummer was with the trumpeter from the late seventies on. Foster, who has provided finely shaded support for everyone from Joe Henderson to Shirley Horn, probably knows more about Davis's uncanny rhythmic instincts than anyone, and he'll no doubt try to convey their seductive power in this tribute. / The assured tenor saxophonist Jackson has lately beefed up his bands with guitar and organ; here, however, he goes minimal, with just drummer **BILLY DRUMMOND** and super-bassist **RON CARTER** as utility players. Dining.

Instrumentalists unite: Trans Am comes to Tramps.

JOHN PATRICK SALISBURY

IRIDIUM, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through May 16: The **CLARK TERRY** quintet. Terry is a very funny guy and one of the most sophisticated flugelhorn players and trumpeters around. He came up through the big bands, notably Basie's and Ellington's (where he enjoyed a brilliant stint), and he has a personal style that blurs the lines between swing and its younger brother bop. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **LES PAUL.**

LENOX LOUNGE, 288 Lenox Ave., between 124th and 125th Sts. (427-0253)—May 14-15: The extravagant vocalist **LEON THOMAS** and his trio. Back in the days when Thomas yodelled his way to fame, he and his partner, saxophonist Pharoah Sanders, were presenting themselves as musical harbingers of the Age of Aquarius. His vision of imminent peace, love, and brotherhood has presumably altered with time, but not his daring approach to song.

RED BLAZER, 32 W. 37th St. (947-6428)—May 14: Commemorating the first anniversary of the death of Frank Sinatra, vocalist **CARY HOFFMAN** joins the fifteen-piece Stan Rubin Big Band for an evening filled with the songs of Old Blue Eyes. Dining.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through May 16: The **STEVE WILSON** quartet. "Generations," Wilson's American début recording as a leader, gave notice that this poised alto saxophonist and flute player is far more than just a trustworthy sideman. He's fulfilled the substantial promise he showed with, among many others, Leon Parker and Chick Corea. Dining.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Reconciling the opposite influences of saxophonists John Coltrane and Warne Marsh is but one of the more impressive accomplishments of **MARK TURNER** (through May 16), who is the most mature and aesthetically satisfying tenorist among the current rash of youngish players. Turner draws on Marsh's temperate tone and impossibly long melodic lines and on Coltrane's urgency and biting rhythms; it's quite a balancing act, but he pulls it off with style. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—The Basilica of St. Francis, in Assisi, which was severely damaged by earthquakes in September, 1997, has sent its treasury on the road. It's a spectacular trove of Byzantine and early-Renaissance paintings, crucifixes, reliquaries, illuminated manuscripts, and books. Through June 27. . . . ¶ "Our New Clothes: Acquisitions of the 1990s in the Costume Institute." Through Aug. 22. . . . ¶ "The Mirror of the Medieval World" presents two decades' worth of works acquired by the Cloisters and the Met's department of medieval art. Through July 4. . . . ¶ "Picasso: Painter and Sculptor in Clay." Through June 6. . . . ¶ "Guardians of the Longhouse: Art in Borneo." . . . ¶ "Hans Hofmann at the Metropolitan Museum." . . . ¶ The museum's roof garden reopens with an installation of sculptures by Magdalena Abakanowicz which includes her solemn "Backward Seated Figures," with its twenty headless forms turned away from the viewer. . . . ¶ The museum has opened its newly renovated Greek galleries, filled with Attic treasures, Athenian marbles, Archaic pottery, and classical grave reliefs. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—"Sigmar Polke: Works on Paper, 1963-74." Through June 16. . . . ¶ "Projects 68: William Kentridge" presents "Stereoscope," a new eight-minute film by the South African animator, along with thirty of the sixty-five large charcoal drawings it was made from. The film's dreamlike narrative revolves around Soho Eckstein, a fictional Johannesburg businessman, but Kentridge's real subject is the difficult process of change in his homeland. It's a subject for which his laborious technique, with its ghostly, incomplete erasures, seems like a blunt and perfect metaphor. Through June 8. . . . ¶ "The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect." Through June 1. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"Photography: An Expanded View" includes works by Cindy Sherman, Anna Gaskell, Rineke Dijkstra, Uta Barth, Andreas Gursky, and Tseng Kwong Chi. Through May 16. . . . ¶ "Jim Dine: Walking Memory, 1959-69." Through May 16. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—"The American Century: Art & Culture 1900-2000 (Part I: 1900-50)." The first half of America's mid-career retrospective, installed on all five floors, includes Grant Wood's "American Gothic," Ben Shahn's "The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti," Alfred Stieglitz's "The Steerage," Georgia O'Keeffe's "Summer Days," and Jackson Pollock's "Number 27." Through Aug. 22. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Domestic Transformations: Working in Brooklyn" is a homemaking-themed show by borough artists. Ron Baron's curtain of baseball cards marks off the space, Andy Yoder's softly advancing braided rugs warm it, Jean Blackburn's delicately jigsawed dressers furnish it, and Ann Agee's porcelain figurines people it. Agee, whose previous work includes a "Lake Michigan Bathroom" tiled completely in blue-and-white wetland scenes, puts her technique to work here miniaturizing, glazing, and gilding contemporary city dwellers—neighbors as tchotchkes. Through June 13. . . . ¶ "Mariko Mori: Empty Dream" offers computer-generated photographs and installations by the Japanese artist. Through Aug. 15. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—"The Endurance: Shackleton's Legendary Antarctic Expedition" features more than a hundred and fifty stark and beautiful pictures taken by Frank Hurley, the photographer crewman on that 1914-16 adventure. Also on display are crew members' effects, including clothing and a diary, and the James Caird, the lifeboat in which Shackleton and five of his crew made their amazing eight-hundred-mile journey to South Georgia Island in order to get help and return to rescue the entire expedition—which they did. Surrounded by videos of rolling icy seas, the tiny boat makes the prospect of a sweltering New York summer suddenly delightful. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

JEWISH MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (423-3200)—"Sigmund Freud: Conflict and Culture." Freud's legacy may be pernicious or liberating; either way, it doesn't offer much to look at. Hence the curators of this exhibition, which originated at the Library of Congress, have supplemented the lackluster main attraction—vitrines full of photographs and handwritten manuscripts in German—with a barrage of film clips, including scenes from "Psycho" and "Equus," "The Flintstones" and "The Simpsons." Intellectual reappraisal seems to be the aim, but the effect is more likely to be measured in video rentals. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

SEAN SCULLY—Two shows of stripe paintings, in the unique vein that this obstinate Irish-born painter has been mining for nearly twenty years. For all their familiar brawny good looks, Scully's works remain marvellously subtle and allusive. At Danese, his palette is dominated by stony grays and ochres, intimating colors of abrasion and austerity. At Lelong, larger works in pinks, blues, and sour greens glow with a strange brightness, like descendants of Marsden Hartley's bright but mournful abstractions. Both shows through June 11. (Danese, 41 E. 57th St., 223-2227; and Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St., 315-0470.)

DAISY YOUNGBLOOD—Ravishingly melancholy sculptures of animals—horses, elephants, a pregnant chimpanzee—and one of the late art dealer Richard Bellamy. The Bellamy portrait, with its gimlet eyes and wormlike body, is unforgettable—but then so are most of the pieces here. The largest, a bronze gorilla whose body seems to be made of sutured, crumpled planes, like a John Chamberlain sculpture, wears a dismissive expression of bourgeois hauteur reminiscent of Ingres's portrait of Monsieur Bertin. Through May 29. (McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 688-5951.)

SHORT LIST—**JOE ANDOE,** Helman, 20 W. 57th St. 245-2888. Through June 5. . . . **BRETT BIGBEE,** De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 262-5050. Through June 4. . . . **ERIC FISCHL,** Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 752-2929. Through June 26. . . . **BRENDA GOODMAN,** Kouros, 23 E. 73rd St. 288-5888. Through May 15. . . . **RED GROOMS,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900. Open Mondays; through May 18. . . . **SERGIO HERNANDEZ,** Associated American Artists, 20 W. 57th St. 399-5510. Through June 4. . . . **DAVID HOCKNEY,** Gray, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 472-8787. Through May 28. . . . **PER KIRKEBY,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550. Through June 11. . . . **WELDON KEES,** Gallery Gertrude Stein, 56 W. 57th St. 535-0600. Through June 26. . . . **ELLSWORTH KELLY,** Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 744-7400. Through June 26. . . . **BRICE MARDEN,** C & M, 45 E. 78th St. 861-0020. Through May 29. . . . **PETER POSKAS,** Schmidt Bingham, 41 E. 57th St. 888-1122. Through May 28. . . . **JULIAN SCHNABEL,** Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292. Through June 5 (See also Galleries—Downtown.) . . . **SARAH SUPPLEE,** Tatistcheff, 50 W. 57th St. 664-0907. Through June 5. . . . **JOSEPH MALLORD WILLIAM TURNER,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 879-6606. Open Mondays; through June 5. . . . **CY TWOMBLY,** Hirschl & Adler Modern, 21 E. 70th St. 535-8810. Through June 12. . . . **STANFORD WHITE,** Davis & Langdale, 231 E. 60th St. 838-0333. Through June 5.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

PAUL BLOODGOOD—"Now Wait for Last Year" is a series of oil paintings with varied sources of inspiration. The compositions mimic Jackson Pollock's enamel paintings, the brushwork is modelled on the shimmery strokes of Cézanne, and the palette is limited to only those colors available in the days of Manet. First impressions of links to fifties abstraction give way to more lyrical pleasures as one detects secret passages of fin-de-siècle lines. Bloodgood's pairing of opposing traditions also evokes the intellectual experiments perpetrated by the antipainting Conceptualists of the seventies. Still, these are not think pieces: the colors buzz, the lines jangle, and even the heady rules that Bloodgood has devised for himself betray his exuberance for paint. Through May 15. (AC Project Room, 453 W. 17th St. 645-4970.)

BOB KNOX—Paintings that capture the design quirks of fifties-era moderne interiors (vast picture windows, pillowed conversation pits, zebra-skin throw rugs). Though the rooms are eerily unpeopled (have the residents gone to their bomb shelters?), they still reveal the sort of minute traces of habitation that can turn a real-estate tour suddenly pathetic: abandoned coffee cups, a magazine tossed on a couch, electric candles left blazing in a dark nook. A strange and persuasive mix

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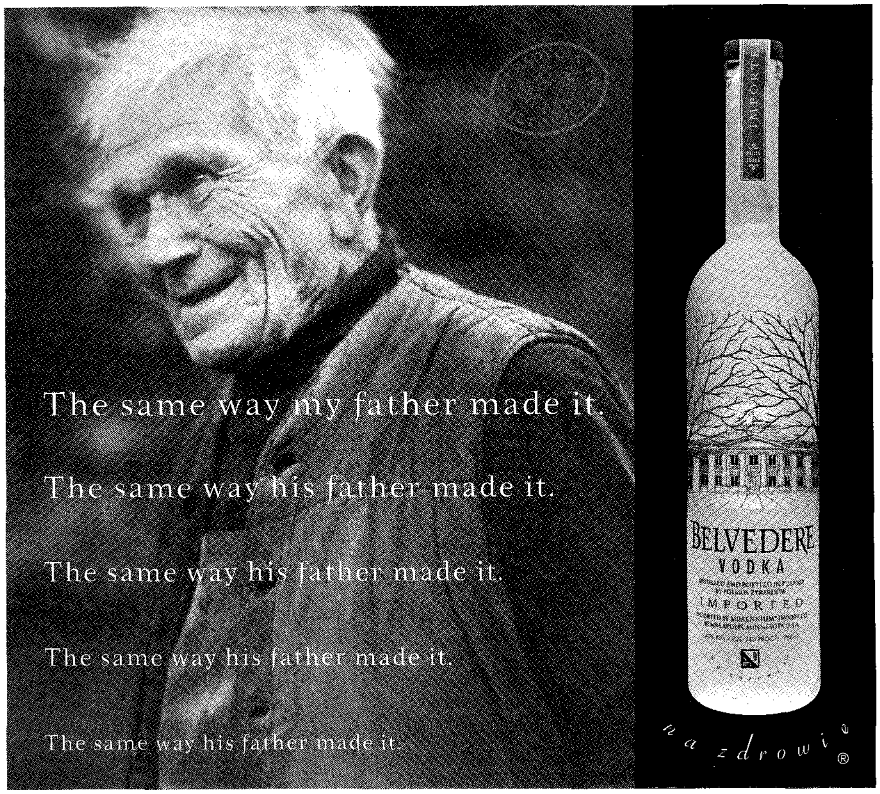

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of optimism and sterility. Through May 22. (Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 645-1701.)

SHORT LIST—SERENA BOCCHINO, Coploff, 526 W. 26th St. 741-1149. Through May 22. . . . **CHRISTOPHER BROOKS,** Goldsworthy, 453 W. 17th St. 414-4560. Through May 29. . . . **JOY GARNETT,** Debs, 529 W. 20th St. 647-7080. Through June 5. . . . **GARY GISSLER,** Kirkland, 504 W. 22nd St. 627-3930. Through June 5. . . . **SEAN LANDERS,** Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000. Through May 22. . . . **FIONA RAE,** Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 206-9100. Through May 28. . . . **TONY SMITH,** Paula Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 255-1105. Through July 15. . . . **JUAN USLÉ,** Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727. Through June 5.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

ERIC CHAN AND HEATHER SCHATZ—These longtime collaborators (who work as EricHeather ChanSchatz) present "multi-material architectural accessories," that is, sliding-door display boxes that frame brilliantly colored machine-embroidered tapestries. Such designs are an outgrowth of the team's long-term project of storing, tracking, and "data-mining" families of forms and ideas (corporate logos, say, or the textile bestiary from medieval unicorns to polo ponies). For all its heavy theorizing, the work has the tactile and chaotic appeal of street fashion. Through June 5. (Basilico Fine Arts, 26 Wooster St. 966-1831.)

TRACEY EMIN—This British artist recounts incidents from her own life in drawings, photos, videos, memorabilia, quilts, neon signs, and large-scale sculptures—including the reconstruction of a Margate beach hut where a boyfriend abandoned her. The show's merits and flaws are those of many first novels; her visual memoirs have the woozy perspective of the first-person format, along with its sympathetic pull. The confrontational nude self-portrait on her invitation and the arresting "Psycho Slut" quilt cannot disguise the vulnerability of this promising début. Through June 19. (Lehmann Maupin, 39 Greene St. 965-0753.)

TERESITA FERNÁNDEZ—Five translucent cloth structures, hung from the ceiling, pinned to the floor, and lit from the inside, mix light sculpture and architecture. As in the tiny, flashlight-illuminated reading rooms of childhood—between the blankets and the bed—a warm glow draws viewers in. "Double Hatch Spill," a set of white rope ladders swinging from ceiling platforms in the next room, is less fetching but also strong. Through June 1. (Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.)

LISA KRIVACKA—Oil-on-board paintings based on the sort of postcards that could once be bought at highway tourist attractions, e.g., "America's Tallest Radio Tower," "The Pennsylvania Turnpike," "The State Highway Building in Columbia, S.C." The Tennessee-born painter has captured the anonymity of such locales without compromising the touching earnestness of their chamber-of-commerce boosterism. Through July 3. (Bodell, 13 E. 7th St. 477-1820. Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, noon to 7; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

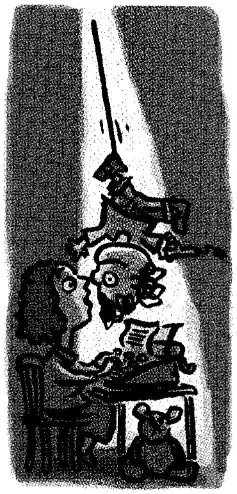
JULIAN SCHNABEL—"Plate Paintings: 1978-97." Schnabel's early plate paintings are the works that established him as the brashest, baddest of the American neo-expressionists. Although Schnabel became famous for affixing broken crockery to his pictures, he never limited himself to plates: these works include stag horns, driftwood, chains, and smashed amphorae and other Greco-Roman-like objects. One extraordinary painting, "The Raft" (1982), includes a bronze tree branch projecting from the canvas, rather like the outstretched arm of the desperate man at the center of Géricault's "Raft of the Medusa." This show represents the artist at his best. Through June 5. (Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St. 431-9224.)

SHORT LIST—PAUL FEELEY, Markey, 55 Vandam St. 627-4446. Through May 22. . . . **GUILLERMO KUITCA,** Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St.

BOOK CURRENTS

Mama's Boys

THE difficulties of raising girls have been examined so thoroughly in recent books—"Reviving Ophelia," "Schoolgirls: Young Women, Self-Esteem, and the Confidence Gap"—that it was beginning to look as though boys were getting short shrift. **BETWEEN MOTHERS AND SONS** (Scribner), a collection of essays by women writers, edited by Patricia Stevens, helps to tip the scales back. Not surprisingly, guns—and the fascination many little boys have with them—are a source of much discussion. Other topics include circumcision, one single mother's fear that her son will grow up "throwing like a girl," and advice on how to survive the teen-age years. The novelist Janet Burroway writes of taking her nineteen-year-old son (whose mantra at the time was "My country right or wrong") to a cocktail party of some liberal friends and being overwhelmed with conflicting emotions when an old acquaintance approached her: " 'I've been talking to your son,' he said, and set his glass against his chin. 'My God, how do you stand it!' "



RUSSELL CHRISTIAN

Psychologist William Pollack, in his study entitled **REAL BOYS** (just out in paperback from Owl), maintains that, in order to help curb the rise in depression and suicide among teen-age boys, mothers should love their sons freely, paying no attention to societal pressures to distance themselves as boys enter puberty. Charles Lindbergh's mother certainly had no problem with that kind of unconditional approach. In the Pulitzer Prize-winning biography **LINDBERGH** (Putnam), A. Scott Berg describes how the aviator and his mother, Evangeline, were so close that she actually roomed with him in college.

Roy Blount, Jr.,'s comic memoir **BE SWEET** (Knopf), also in paperback, is one long tribute to his mother—a woman who in talks with her daughter would refer to sex as "the magic and the mystery" but with her son would take a somewhat different tack. As Blount remembers it, "All I ever heard from her was, 'You're playing with dynamite.' "

Books.

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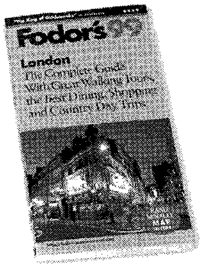

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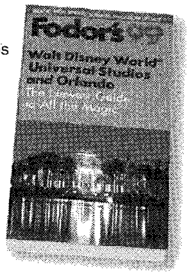

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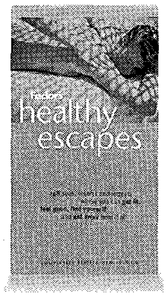

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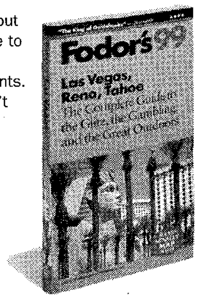

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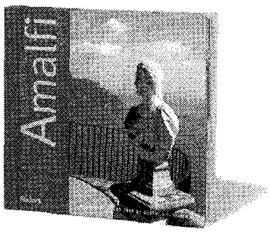

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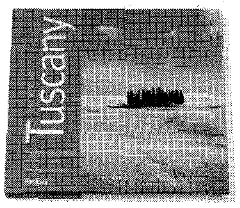

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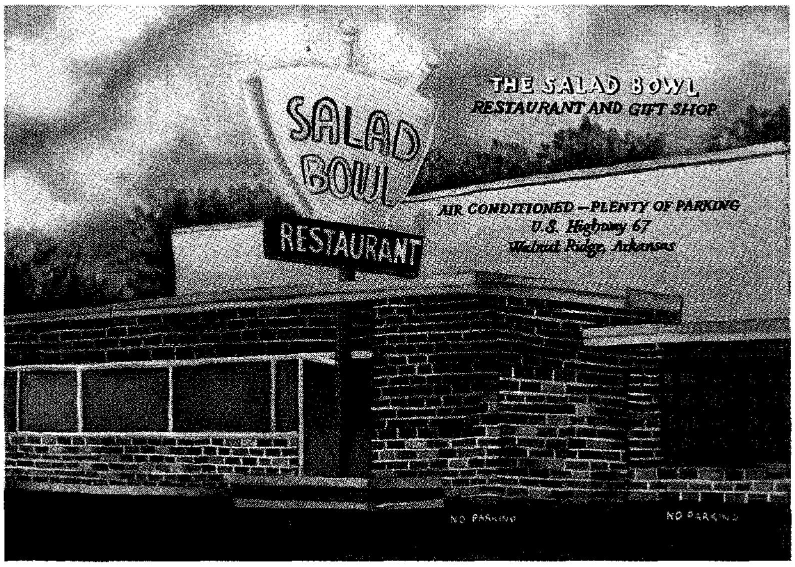
431-3685. Through June 12. . . . **GREGORY LEE PICKARD,** Lubelski, 473 Broadway. 274-8993. Through May 22. . . . **NANCY RUBINS,** Kasmin, 74 Grand St. 219-3219. Through May 29. . . . **PETER SORIANO** and **TONY BERLANT,** Lennon, Weinberg, 560 Broadway. 941-0012. Both shows through May 28. . . . **LINDA STOJAK,** Haller, 560 Broadway. 219-2500. Through June 8. . . . **FRANZ WEST,** Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074. Through May 22. . . . **KAREN YASINSKY,** Kaplan, 48 Greene St. 226-6131. Through May 15.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S—May 12: An auction of Impressionist and modern art, including fine pieces by Degas, Klee, Matisse, and Léger. . . . ¶ May 18: The opening evening of a two-day sale of contemporary art features notable works by Lucian Freud, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Francis Bacon, and other luminaries. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S—May 12-13: Impressionist and nineteenth-century art, including important pieces by van Gogh, Monet, Pissarro, and Renoir. . . . ¶ May 13: Twentieth-century works on paper. . . . ¶ May 13-14: Twentieth-century paintings and sculptures. . . . ¶ May 17: Coins. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

ANTIQUORUM—Sales of jewelry, gemstones, watches, and other items, including a carbon tennis ball with a gold seam, studded with twenty-three hundred diamonds, the twin of a piece awarded to Steffi Graf when she won the 1993 Kraft Women's Singles Championship. (Grand Havana Room, 666 Fifth Ave. May 13. For information, call 750-1103.)



"The Salad Bowl" (1999), by Lisa Krivacka, at Bodell.

PHOTOGRAPHY

ELIOT PORTER (1901-90)—Rare vintage dye-transfer prints by a resolute wilderness preservationist and one of the most important pioneers of serious color photography. Through May 15. (Alan Klotz/Photocollect, 22 E. 72nd St. 327-2211. Closed Tuesdays.)

"WEEK OF PHOTOGRAPHY 1999"—In celebration of its twenty-fifth anniversary, the International Center of Photography has scheduled a week of photography-related events at venues around town, including gallery talks, workshops, and studio visits. For more information, call 860-1777.

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY—"Newman's Gift: 60 Years of Photography," a retrospective of the portraitist Arnold Newman's career. Through June 6. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY MIDTOWN—"To the Rescue: Eight Artists in an Archive." Through May 16. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

SHORT LIST—**DIETER APPELT** and **JOHN SZARKOWSKI,** Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999. Both shows through June 12. . . . **RALPH BARTHOLOMEW, JR.,** De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482. Through June 12. . . . **FRANK GOHLKE** and **STUART KLIPPER,** Dorsky, 379 West Broadway. 966-6170. Through June 26. . . . **LAURENT MILLET,** Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 25th St. 989-7600. Through May 15. . . . **ANDREA MODICA,** Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070. Through June 26. . . . **TRACEY MOFFATT,** Morris, 465 W. 23rd St. 727-2753. Through June 25. . . . **ANDREW MOORE,** Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255. Through May 15. . . . **WILLIAM MORTENSEN,** Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819. Through June 26. . . . **RAY MORTENSON,** Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166. Through June 4. . . . **ARNOLD NEWMAN,** Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010. Through June 19. . . . **JOHN PATRICK SALISBURY,** Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747. Through May 15. . . . **SAM SAMORE,** Gorney, Bravin, and Lee, 526 W. 26th St. 352-8372. Through June 5. . . . **TOSHIO SHIBATA,** Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 397-3930. Through May 27. . . . **PAUL WOLFF,** Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292. Through June 19.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Guggenheim Museum, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, and the American Museum of Natural History.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(The box-office number for Carnegie Hall and Weill Recital Hall is 247-7800, and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 501-3330.)

OPERA

"LA SONNAMBULA"—Eve Queler directs Opera Orchestra of New York in Bellini's bel-canto classic, with sopranos Ruth Ann Swenson and Lynette Tapia, mezzo-soprano Carla Wood, tenor Gregory Kunde, and bass-baritone John Relyea. (Carnegie Hall. May 12 at 8.)

"HALKA"—Nearly every Eastern European country boasts a nationalistic opera that stirs the hearts of its people but defies export. In the case of Poland, the opera is "Halka," composed in 1846-47 by Stanislaw Moniuszko, a fellow-student of Chopin's at the Warsaw Conservatory. The work here receives its first fully (if modestly) staged production in the United States, with musical director and pianist Pablo Zinger taking the part of the orchestra. (Liederkranz Club, 6 E. 87th St. May 12 and May 14 at 8. For information about tickets, call 724-9323.)

"GIOVANNA D'ARCO"—Robert Bass leads a concert performance of Verdi's 1845 opera, with soprano Lauren Flanigan, tenor Hugh Smith, baritone Nikolai Putilin, the Collegiate Chorale, the Riverside Choral Society, and the Orchestra of St. Luke's. (Carnegie Hall. May 13 at 8.)

LA GRAN SCENA OPERA COMPANY—The parody troupe *en travestie.* (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. May 14-15 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC—Franz Welser-Möst conducts Lou Harrison's Suite for Violin, Piano, and Small Orchestra (a work composed in 1951, redolent of gamelan music, here featuring violinist Robert McDuffie and pianist Christopher Taylor), in addition to Bruckner's Symphony No. 5. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. May 13-15 at 8. . . . **NOTE:** At 7 each evening, Messrs. McDuffie and Taylor perform a pre-concert recital, open to ticket holders, comprising Tobias Picker's "Invisible Lilacs" and Peter Lieberson's "Elegy.")

AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA—Leon Botstein conducts Viennese music from the early decades of the twentieth century: Zemlinsky's six Symphonic Songs on texts by Maeterlinck (from 1913), Robert Fuchs's Symphony No. 3 (1907), Franz Schreker's Suite from "Der Geburtstag der Infantin" (1923), and Mahler's five "Rückert-lieder" (1901). Mezzo-soprano Florence Quivar and baritone Donnie Ray Albert are the respective soloists in the Mahler and Zemlinsky works. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. May 12 at 8.)

ORATORIO SOCIETY OF NEW YORK—Lyndon Woodside directs a double bill of Orff's "Carmina Burana" and Kodály's "Psalmus Hungaricus." (Carnegie Hall. May 14 at 8.)

BROOKLYN PHILHARMONIC—Robert Spano conducts the orchestra and the Dessoff Choirs in Mahler's Symphony No. 2 (the "Resurrection"). (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. May 14-15 at 8.)

NEW YORK COLLEGIUM—Andrew Parrot directs the singers and period-instrument ensemble in music written for the English Chapel Royal by Purcell and Handel (including the latter's "Utrecht Te Deum"). (Church of St. Vincent Ferrer, 869 Lexington Ave., at 66th St. May 15 at 8. For information about tickets, call 717-9246.)

AMERICAN COMPOSERS ORCHESTRA—Dennis Russell Davies leads two Whitman-inspired works: Bolcom's "A Whitman Triptych" (featuring mezzo-soprano Emily Golden) and Hindemith's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" (with mezzo-soprano Milagro Vargas, baritone André-Solomon Glover, and the Judith Clurman Chorale). (Carnegie Hall. May 16 at 3. . . . **NOTE:** On May 15 at 2, at the New-York Historical Society, 2 W. 77th St., the orchestra sponsors a recital with commentary about Whitman and music; for reservations, call 977-8495.)

CANTERBURY CHORAL SOCIETY—Charles Dodsley Walker directs Verdi's Requiem. (Church of the Heavenly Rest, Fifth Ave. at 90th St. May 16 at 4. Tickets at the door.)

JUPITER SYMPHONY—Jens Nygaard conducts Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 3 (the "Scotch"), Théodore Dubois's Suite No. 1, and Rachmaninoff's "Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini" (featuring pianist Ruth Laredo). (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. May 17 at 2 and 7 and May 19 at 8. For information about tickets, call 799-1259.)

NEW YORK POPS—Skitch Henderson leads some of the ensemble's greatest hits, with several Broadway luminaries making cameo appearances. (Carnegie Hall. May 17 at 7:30. A benefit concert.)

RECITALS

SYLVAN WINDS—The ensemble offers Barber's "Summer Music," Harbison's Quintet for Winds, and, with pianist Elizabeth Difelice assisting, Mozart's Piano Quintet in

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E-Flat Major and Poulenc's Sextet. (Weill Recital Hall. May 12 at 8.)

Lynne Vardaman—Soprano, performing Schoenberg's Four Songs (Op. 2), Messiaen's "Poèmes pour Mi," and the premières of Eric Samuelson's "Three Songs of Oscar Wilde" and Jack Beeson's "operina" entitled "Practice in the Art of Elocution." Pianist Marc Peloquin assists. (Merkin Concert Hall. May 12 at 8.)

Bargemusic—Violinist Ida Levin, violist Ryo Sasaki, and cellist Ronald Thomas play Beethoven's String Trio in E-Flat Major (Op. 3, No. 1); pianist Edward Auer joins them for Chausson's Piano Quartet in A Major. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. May 13 at 7:30 and May 16 at 4.)

Musicians from the Vienna Philharmonic—Six of the group's string players present three Viennese masterworks as a musical complement to the Jewish Museum's exhibit about Freud's Vienna: the opening sextet from Strauss's "Capriccio," Schubert's "Rosamunde" Quartet, and Schoenberg's "Verklärte Nacht." (Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. 423-3224. May 13 at 8.)

"Vienna on Hollywood Boulevard"—More Vienna-related music—in this case, by Erich Wolfgang Korngold, who left the "Stadt meiner Träume" in 1934 for the sunnier climes of the City of Angels, where he flourished as a film composer. In this recital, pianist Roland Pöntinen performs several solo pieces, violinist Christina Sunnerstam joins him for the G-Major Violin Sonata, and cellist Dorothy Lawson completes the ensemble for the Piano Trio. (Caspary Auditorium, Rockefeller University, York Ave. at 66th St. 924-7299. May 13 at 8.)

Thomas Buckner—The baritone performs the premières of pieces by Larry Austin, Steven Dickman, and Henry Threadgill, as well as a joint improvisation with Jon Gibson; assisted by a chamber ensemble conducted by David Gilbert. (Merkin Concert Hall. May 13 at 8.)

Musicians Accord—Presenting chamber works by two late centenarians—Gershwin and Chávez—and three very much alive sexagenarians: Joan Tower, John Harbison, and John Corigliano. (St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 346 W. 20th St. May 13 and May 15 at 8. Tickets at the door. . . . **note:** The May 15 concert will be expanded to feature oboist Matt Sullivan, to conclude an oboe fair beginning at 1, at the same venue.)

Anonymous 4—The women's vocal quartet performs music by Francesco Landini, the most eminent composer of the trecento, with readings from Dante interspersed. (Cloisters, Fort Tryon Park. 650-2290. May 15-16 at 3.)

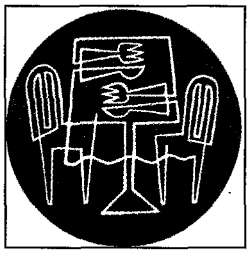
Yo-Yo Ma and Jeffrey Kahane—The cellist and the pianist perform a handful of pieces from the "New Goldberg Variations," a set of short recital works commissioned by Judith and the late Robert Goldberg of Medford, Massachusetts, and inspired by—and reflecting the bass progression or melodic material of—Bach's famous keyboard collection of 1741. The latter-day Bachs represented here are Kenneth Frazelle, Christopher Rouse, Peter Lieberson, John Corigliano, Peter Schickele, and Richard Danielpour. Completing the program are cello sonatas by Bach (in D Major, BWV 1028, originally for viola da gamba) and Rachmaninoff. (Carnegie Hall. May 15 at 7:30.)

Misha Dichter—The pianist performs Beethoven's C-Major Polonaise (Op. 89) and "Rondo a Capriccio" in G Major (Op. 129, the "Rage Over a Lost Penny"), Schumann's "Davidsbündlertänze," Chopin's Polonaise in F-Sharp Minor (Op. 44) and four of his mazurkas, and Prokofiev's Sonata No. 7. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. May 15 at 8.)

Dana Hanchard—In the final concert of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts' Principally Poulenc series, the soprano offers a generous selection of the composer's songs, along with works by several of his contemporaries, assisted by pianist Jed Distler. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. May 15 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

Fred Sherry—Discussing and performing the premières of chamber works involving cello by Edward Taylor, Daniel Kellogg, Derek Bermel, and David Horne. (Merkin Concert Hall. May 15 at 9.)

TABLES FOR TWO



Calle Ocho, 446 Columbus Ave., between 81st and 82nd Sts. (873-5025)—The most popular restaurants on the Upper West Side tend to be the ones that serve the largest portions. People line up outside the diner where the pancakes are as big as Frisbees, or wait for hours to get into the most depressing Chinese restaurant imaginable while drinking free wine on the sidewalk. But this pan-Latin eatery has so much going for it—an exuberant personality, good looks, unusual taste—that it doesn't need heaping helpings to draw a crowd.

Chef Alex Garcia came to Columbus Avenue by way of Patria, the Flatiron-district *nuevo*-Latino restaurant; the food at Calle Ocho has the exotic ingredients and playfulness that have made that place a hit, but it's not so complex that it makes your head spin. Leave that to the refreshing and sneakily potent *mojitos* (the concoctions of rum, lime, mint, and sugar, said to have been Hemingway's favorite poison) and the slightly surreal atmosphere. (Picture a movie-set version of a Cuban train station in the fifties, decorated with cigar-band murals and lit by six-foot lanterns shaped like upside-down calla lilies.)

Allow the well-informed staff to explain what the heck, exactly, a *malanga* or an *asopado* is, and then jump in. You could start with something from the raw bar, but what a bore when you can have a lovely lobster ceviche, marinated in grapefruit juice and served on a plate paved with slices of mango, or some tiny soft tacos, which you make yourself with mahimahi, shredded chipotle chicken, barbecued beef, and fresh tomato-and-corn salsa. The entrées can be uneven, but the Dominican seafood stew has a coconut broth that you'll want to take a bath in. And if the enthusiastic waiters happen to tell you a bit more than you want to know ("Our chef is just phenomenal. He's doing some amazing things in the dungeon with a vat of rum and a plastic bag"), they won't steer you wrong: the pineapple-cinnamon-infused rum *is* delicious. (Open daily for dinner and Sundays for brunch as well. Entrées $16-$24.)

City Island Baroque Ensemble—This way-uptown series marks its sixth anniversary with Bach's "Brandenburg" Concertos No. 3 and No. 6, featuring violists Rebecca Young and Ori Kam in the latter. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478. May 16 at noon.)

New York Philharmonic Ensembles—Members of the orchestra, plus several guests, play Kjell Mørk Karlsen's Quintet for Flute and Strings, Hindemith's Sonata for Four French Horns, Paul Schoenfield's "Café Music" (a piano trio rich in jazz and klezmer overtones), and Schumann's Piano Quartet. (Merkin Concert Hall. May 16 at 3.)

Margaret Leng Tan—The avant-garde pianist, recently an indefatigable advocate of music for the toy piano, performs and discusses surprising works from her repertoire. (BAMcafé, Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. May 16 at 5. No tickets necessary.)

Speculum Musicae—Performing Schnittke's String Trio and String Quartet No. 2, as well as Steven Mackey's "Humble River." (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. May 17 at 8. For information about tickets, call 799-2227.)

St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble—The group's springtime Baroque series concludes with an all-Vivaldi concert: a sinfonia for strings, a flute concerto, a bassoon concerto, and the first four violin concertos of the composer's Op. 8, popularly known as "The Four Seasons." (Temple Emanu-El, Fifth Ave. at 65th St. May 18 at 6:30. No tickets necessary.)

Ethos Percussion Group—Drummer Glen Velez assists the percussion quartet in a program that includes the premières of some of his own pieces and a work by Jacqueline Jeeyoung Kim, plus Carlos Stasi's "33 Samra Zabobra" and a selection of traditional Mexican and Guatemalan marimba music. (Merkin Concert Hall. May 18 at 8.)

Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio—The group concludes its season-long exploration of the music of Beethoven and Shostakovich by performing the former's two Trios in B-Flat Major (Op. 97, or the "Archduke," and Op. Posth.) and his "Kakadu" Variations, as well as the latter's Viola Sonata. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. May 18-19 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Wall to Wall—On a recent trip to Turkey, the sculptor Maria Elena González became intrigued with the idea of flying carpets. When she returned to her Red Hook studio, she decided to take the mythical notion out for an urban spin. Using blueprints provided by the New York City Housing Authority, González constructed an outdoor sculpture—a full-scale floor layout of a three-bedroom apartment in the Red Hook East Houses. Her twenty-seven-by-thirty-nine-foot undulating carpet is made of Safety Guard, the black rubberized playground material, and features lines of white iridescent paint which delineate the six rooms of the apartment. Installed one foot off the ground, it is an inviting work. "I welcome people to climb on it," González says. "It's a flying carpet, so it makes sense to have people on it." (Coffey Park, Dwight St. at Verona St., Brooklyn. May 16 through Nov. 30.)

Readings—May 13 at 8: By A. M. Homes, from her novel "Music for Torching," Terese Svoboda, from her novel "A Drink Called Paradise," and Elissa Schappell, from her fiction. (National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ May 16 at 7: By Melissa Bank, from her novel, "A Girl's Guide to Hunting and Fishing," and Daniel Wallace, from his novel, "A Big Fish." (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ May 18 at 6: By Mary Jarrell, from her memoir, "Remembering Randall," and Jarrell biographer William Pritchard, from the poet's works. Illustrator Maurice Sendak will also talk about his collaboration with Jarrell. (New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. No tickets necessary.)

Talk—May 12 at 6: A discussion of women and Paris, with Jane Benardete, professor of English at Hunter College, talking about the food writer M. F. K. Fisher; Noel Riley Fitch, author of "Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation," discussing the legendary bookstore owner; and Brenda Wineapple, author of "Genêt: A Biography of Janet Flanner," considering the life of the *New Yorker* correspondent. (Mercantile Library, 17 E. 47th St. For reservations, which are required, call 755-6710.)

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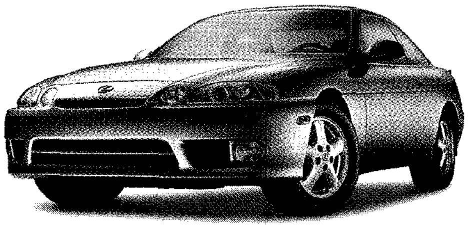

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ON AND OFF THE AVENUE

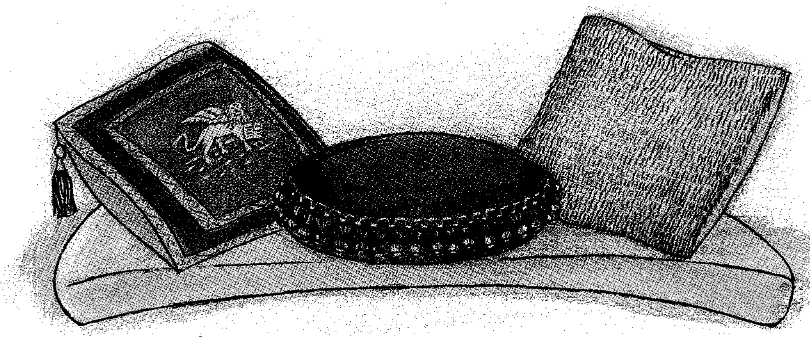
Pillow Talk

PREDICTIONS made years ago that home décor at the end of the millennium would include Mylar armchairs you'd clean with a garden hose and robots to make your morning coffee are turning out to be shy of the mark: in the world of pillows, at least, the mood couldn't be less space age. Fin-de-siècle cushions fall into roughly two camps: they're either harbingers of a calmer, purer environment or they're opulent reminders of a stuffier world in the years before the Great War.

At **Bergdorf Goodman** (754 Fifth Ave.; 753-7300), there's a passel of cushions made from various combinations of flowery needlepoint, faded plush, worn velvet, and swatches from crazy quilts, some of which started life as wall hangings, seat cushions, and other nineteenth-century necessities. A round cherry-colored, tapestry-festooned, fringed number ($480) looks as if it could have been ordered from the 1909 Sears, Roebuck catalogue; it's just the sort of thing Syrie Maugham meant to banish forever when she introduced her all-white room in the late nineteen-twenties.

Around the corner, **Felissimo** (10 W. 56th St.; 247-5656), happily ensconced in a Beaux Arts mansion, recommends greeting the year 2000 with crystals, wind chimes, incense, and something called a Feng Shui Wealth Kit. (Things *aren't* so different from the turn of the last century, when theosophy and séances were all the rage.) Among an assortment of serenity-inducing pillows is one whose capacious surface has been entirely obscured by small rows of gray suède fringe ($225). Flicking one's fingers through the ridges is as soothing and irresistible as petting a cat.

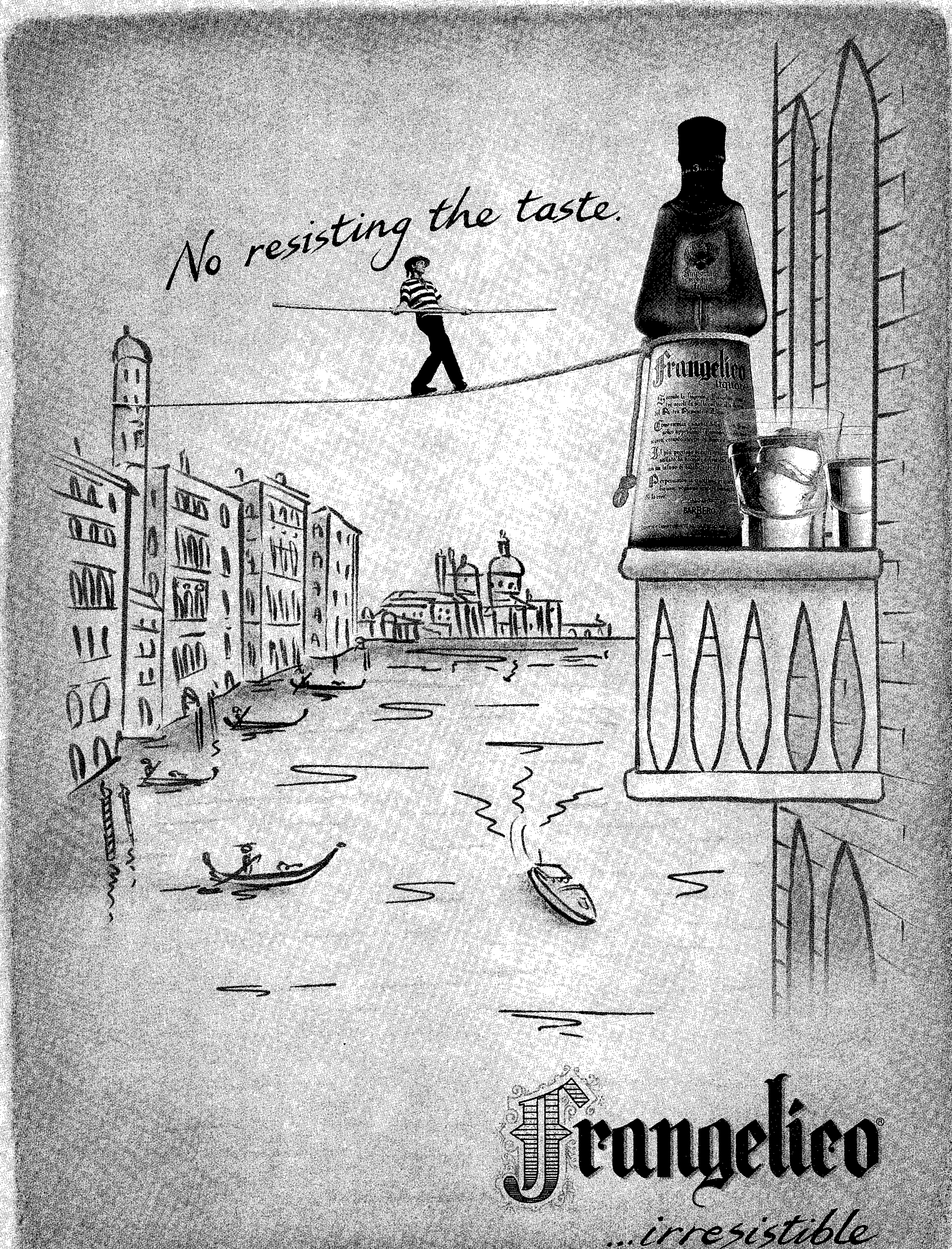
Not Queen Victoria nor Madame Blavatsky but rather the Venetian court inspires the pillows at **Portantina** (895 Madison Ave.; 472-0636). Created from yards of luminous velvet viscose, Portantina's cushions ($400-$800) have been incised with patterns by means of handmade wood blocks; the results are reminiscent of the work of Mario Fortuny, the esteemed textile artist who lived and worked in Venice seventy-five years ago. A particularly radiant example in saffron is embossed with the lion of St. Mark. The goods here may be costly, but they get better with age: a covered stool that's been in the shop a while has a lovely patina so muted it looks like it could have accommodated Mr. Fortuny himself.



Terra Verde (120 Wooster St.; 925-4533) is worlds away from a dusty Venetian atelier: this SoHo boutique offers merchandise so ecologically correct that, in the words of the proprietor, "you could probably eat our paint." The Terra Verdeans have discovered that the chaff of edible grains—semolina, buckwheat, and the like—provides good filling for pillows, and a dandy refuge for weary necks. If one or another hull-laden pillow feels a bit overstuffed, you can just zip open the case and pour some out. What seems like just the right amount of spelt hulls fills a neck roll ($48) whose linen-and-cotton sham has a polka-dot pattern made by clever weaving, the fabric itself being unbleached, undyed, and otherwise unadulterated.

Finally, **Bed, Bath and Beyond** (620 Sixth Ave.; 255-3550), currently in residence in the old Siegel-Cooper department store on what was once Ladies' Mile (when Siegel-Cooper opened, a hundred and three years ago, a crowd of thousands turned out), offers cushions both earthy and refined. William Morris-ish prints decorate a wide range of darkly regal shams ($50-$70); a shimmering emerald velvet square, less glowing than Portantina's, is certainly equal to the task of cheering up a first apartment or summer share ($60); there's even an eighteen-inch white cotton square ($35), filled not with grain hulls but with prosaic polyester, that nevertheless sports a small, valiant green fern embroidered on its homely face.

EDEL RODRIGUEZ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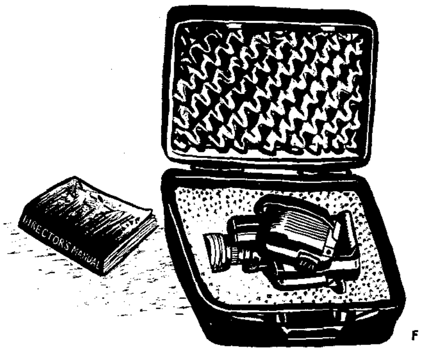


THE MOVIES

OPENING

After Life—Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening May 12.

Edge of Seventeen—The story of a young Ohio boy's coming of age during the summer of 1984. Directed by David Moreton. Opening May 14. (Quad Cinema.)

Endurance—Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening May 14.

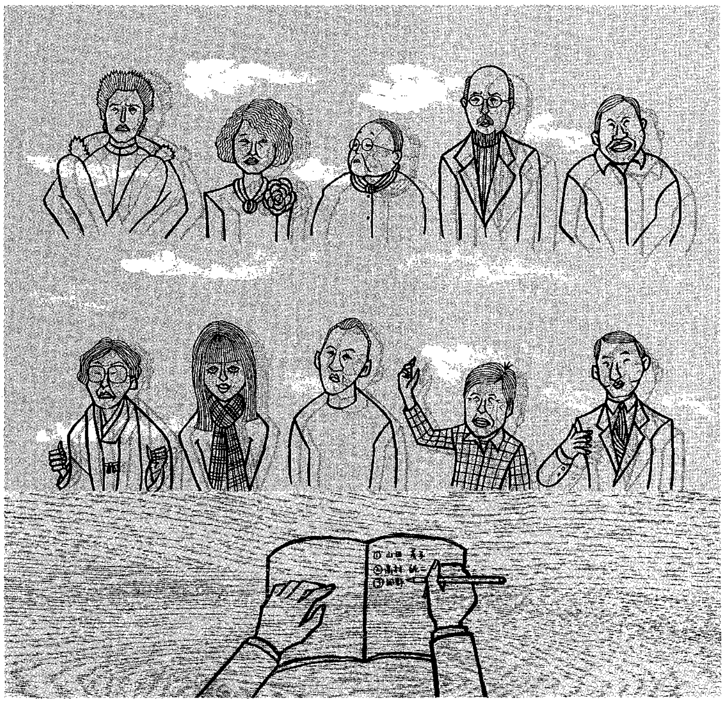
Iris Blond—A tale of the life and loves of a pop musician. Directed by Carlo Verdone. In Italian. Opening May 14. (Angelika Film Center.)

Leila—Dariush Mehrjui's film about what happens when a young Iranian woman learns that she cannot have children. In Farsi. Opening May 14. (Cinema Village.)

A Midsummer Night's Dream—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening May 14. (East 85th Street, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 34th Street Showplace, and Union Square.)

Tea with Mussolini—Franco Zeffirelli's autobiographical film, with Cher, Joan Plowright, Maggie Smith, Judi Dench, Lily Tomlin, Charlie Lucas, and Baird Wallace. Opening May 14. (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

Trippin'—A seventeen-year-old boy has to decide what college to attend and how to get the girl of his dreams to go to the senior prom with him, in this film by David Raynr. Opening May 12. (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, and Village East Cinemas.)



Opening May 12 at Film Forum, Kore-eda Hirokazu's "After Life."

HIROSHI TANABE

FILM NOTES

(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

After Life—Newly dead people assemble in a kind of limbo (it looks like an old school) and are asked to choose, after a polite interview, a single memory of happiness. A celestial film crew then makes a movie of that moment, and the shade is allowed to live with the memory for all eternity. In this sombre, delicate Japanese fantasy, written and directed by Kore-eda Hirokazu (a former documentary-maker), the light is gray and even, the emotions tranquil, the politeness exquisite. Hirokazu has no interest in orgiasts or roller-coaster riders: the cherished moment, it turns out, may be nothing more than a passing mood of pleasure—a breeze felt at a window—or a pleasure given rather than one received. The picture raises a marvellous, fanciful question: Are all movies simply the favorite dreams of the dead? With Naito Taketoshi as a fastidious elderly man whose life was too uneventful to yield an easy choice. In Japanese.—*David Denby* (Film Forum; starting May 12.)

Cookie's Fortune—Robert Altman, in a benevolent mood, has made a lovely ensemble comedy from Anne Rapp's original screenplay about the fate of an inheritance—the house and jewels left behind by one Cookie Orcutt (Patricia Neal), a fine old lady in a small Mississippi town who misses her dead husband so much that she refuses to spend any more time away from him. Cookie's mad nieces (Glenn Close and Julianne Moore) rearrange the evidence of Cookie's suicide so that it looks like a murder, allowing suspicion to fall on a hard-drinking but amiable black man (Charles S. Dutton) who lives in Cookie's guest house. But the movie is not the usual protest against racism; on the contrary, the town works like the kind of happy, quarrelsome extended family in which people have put up with one another's foibles for years.—*D.D.* (4/12/99) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

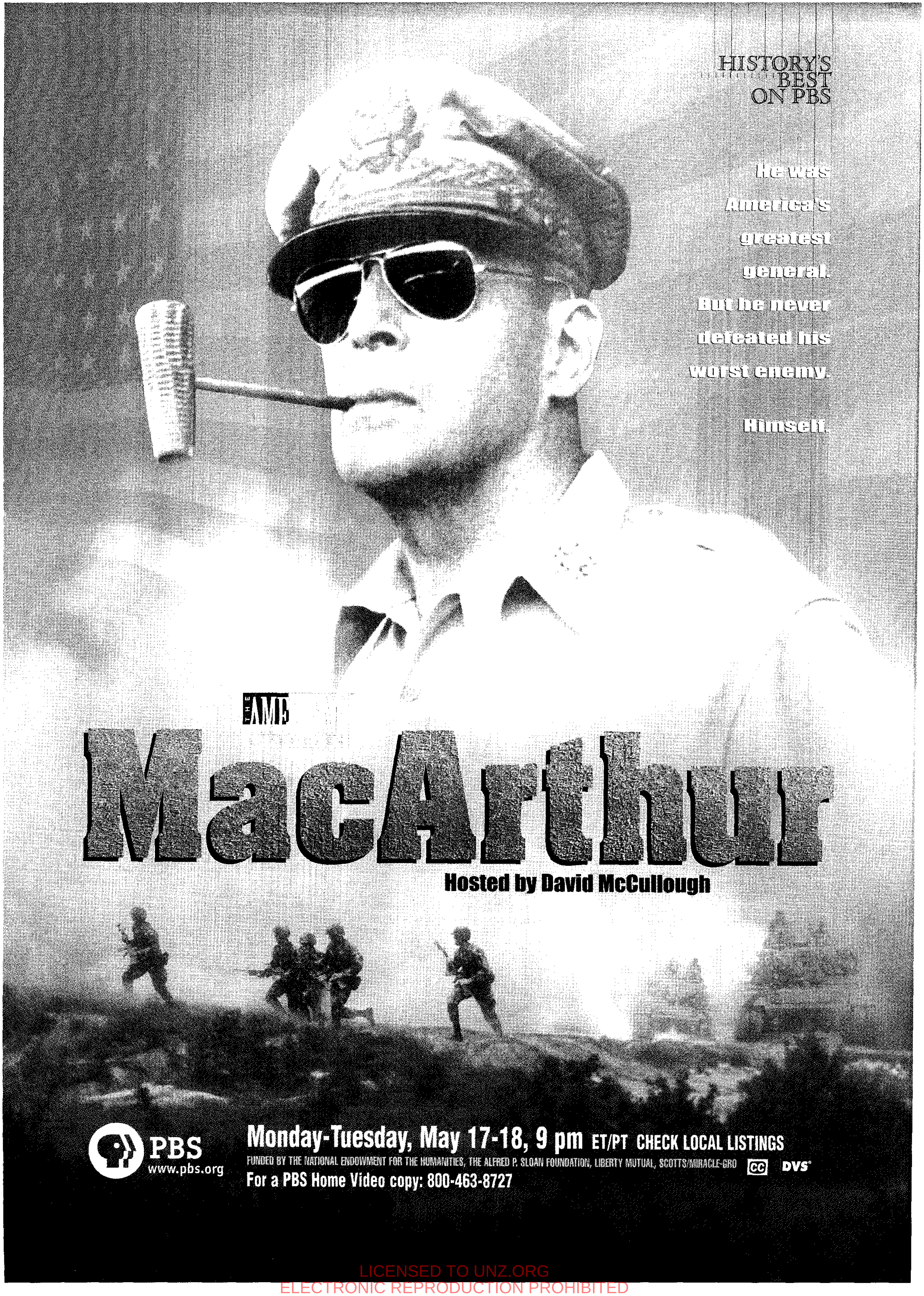
The Dreamlife of Angels—Isa (Elodie Bouchez), a free spirit moseying around northern France with a rucksack, meets Marie (Natacha Régnier) in a clothing factory, and Marie offers her a place to stay. In a sense, Erick Zonca's first feature is little more than the brief history of their friendship; what fires it up, and takes it to the brink of greatness, is not only that the director registers every tremor of his heroines' competing emotions—the smiling blitheness of Isa, the inward fury of the beautiful Marie—but that the story travels so far. The film begins with a scuffed, documentary air that gradually deepens, almost without your noticing, into serene moments of epiphany. In French.—*Anthony Lane* (4/5/99) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Quad Cinema.)

Election—Tracy Flick (Reese Witherspoon), of George Washington Carver High, in Omaha, Nebraska, busts her chops to become the president of the student body. Tracy gathers signatures, bakes cupcakes, uses everyone; she's a cross between Pat and Richard Nixon. Her fair-minded teacher, Mr. McAllister (Matthew Broderick), develops a surprising obsession with Tracy—something about her bland dynamism aggravates his boredom with his own life, and he tries to stop Tracy cold. This remarkable satirical comedy, written by Jim Taylor and directed with deadpan cool by Alexander Payne (the team responsible for the overlooked "Citizen Ruth"), uses the school election as a prism for an analysis of success and failure in American life. There are many surprises and comic turns, some of them rather bitter, and the ending, in its casual way, is stunning. From a novel by Tom Perrotta.—*D.D.* (4/26 & 5/3/99) (Coronet Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

Endurance—Co-produced by Terrence Malick and directed by the British documentarian Leslie Woodhead, this is a serious and surging account of the life and times of the Ethiopian track star Haile Gebrselassie. The times in question are world records; Gebrselassie is, by common consent, the finest distance runner of all time. Americans had their fill of him in 1996, when he took the gold in the 10,000 metres at the Atlanta Olympics, an event that is split into fragments and dotted throughout Woodhead's film. The rest tells of the athlete's childhood in rural Ethiopia, and his determined rise, against the wishes of his father, to the peak of his profession (it feels more like a calling). These scenes are a curious but winning weave of factual history and fictional technique; the young Haile, for instance, is played by the adult Haile's real nephew, and his late mother by his sister. There are moments here that are perhaps too ravishing for their own good—the beauty of the domestic scenes inside the family hut is like an antidote to the brute facts of poverty—and yet, finally, it is impossible not to be stirred by the fluid, frictionless travelling shots of Gebrselassie in motion.—*A.L.* (BAM Rose Cinemas and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas; starting May 14.)

Entrapment—Jon Amiel's slack and predictable caper, with Sean Connery as a master thief and the gorgeous Catherine Zeta-Jones as an insurance investigator out to bring him down. The stars lack any sort of chemistry, which is too bad, since the script, by the always unreliable Ron Bass (with William Broyles), is intended as a romantic cat-and-mouse fantasy. The film wants to bring to mind such lighthearted, gallant heist flicks as Hitchcock's "To Catch a Thief," but it doesn't. A slight—and claustrophobic—entertainment.—*Bruce Diones* (Chelsea West, Criterion Center, Murray Hill Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas.)

eXistenZ—Once again, David Cronenberg uses a movie to play with our minds, and to make us feel disgusted about having a body. Jennifer Jason Leigh, in one of her more somnambulant moods, plays an interactive-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game designer named Allegra, who is attacked while showing off her new creation, eXistenZ. From here on, she is guarded by the justifiably frightened Ted (Jude Law), whom she shyly introduces to the delights of her game. It doesn't look like a best-seller; once you're plugged in, all you appear to do is hang around in a game store and get your hands covered in blood at a virtual fish farm. Cronenberg is so busy plying his in-jokes and drilling his psychosexual meanings into the viewer's brain, or whatever other organ takes his fancy, that he somehow neglects to tell a decent, entertaining story. The movie may be a grim warning against the perils of technology and its ability to spew alternative realities, but Cronenberg himself can hardly claim to have his feet firmly planted on the ground.—*A.L.* (5/10/99) (Angelika Film Center, Cinema 3rd Avenue, and Lincoln Square.)

Go—A crowded new movie from Doug Liman, who made the indie hit "Swingers." This time he has chosen to tell three overlapping stories, all of them starting from the same point: Christmas Eve on the seedy side of Los Angeles. First, a checkout clerk (Sarah Polley) attempts to turn drug dealer, with limited success; second, an English friend of hers (Desmond Askew) pays an incendiary visit to Las Vegas (a favored Liman destination); third, a couple of soap actors are forced to lend their services to a narcotics sting. Nothing works out as expected for any of these people: some of them get badly knocked about; others merely endure sticky misunderstandings. Liman's structure feels complicated rather than fruitfully complex, and the picture works best as a scattering of light comic observations. The cast is certainly up for it, although you miss the one-on-one rapport that Liman built up between his hapless heroes in "Swingers"; if anything, this broader project ends up as the victim of its own ambition.—*A.L.* (4/19/99) (Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

Lamb to the Slaughter (1958)—This twenty-six-minute adaptation of the famous Roald Dahl story, written by Dahl and directed by Alfred Hitchcock for Hitchcock's weekly TV show, crystallizes both men's sardonic wit. Barbara Bel Geddes is superbly understated as the pregnant wife who finds a lethal use for a big piece of meat when her cop husband tells her he's leaving her. It's a droll piece of storytelling—with an O. Henry-like capper—and a vivid argument that policemen are from Mars and housewives are from Venus.—*Michael Sragow* (Museum of Television and Radio; May 13-16.)

The Matrix—It has some of the pop-intellectual momentousness of the first "Terminator," but without the wrenching emotions of that movie. We are all living, it turns out, in "the matrix"—a seeming reality controlled by artificial intelligence and policed by vicious men in black. The few people who are free hole up in a space capsule somewhere above the earth, and Keanu Reeves, who is first seen strapped down, with needles and other paraphernalia stuck into him and a disgusting little creature inserted through his belly button (unfortunately for him, he's got an inny), eventually joins the free and becomes a liberator. He fights the bad guys by flying through the air and engaging them in a rhythmic version of kung fu which has the clickety-clack excitement of tap dancing. The movie is nonsense, but it does achieve a brazenly chic high style—black-on-black, airborne, spasmodic. With Laurence Fishburne, who intones his lines rather than speaking them, as the leader of the free men and women. Written and directed by Larry and Andy Wachowski.—*D.D.* (4/26 & 5/3/99) (Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia, Orpheum VII, State, and Union Square.)

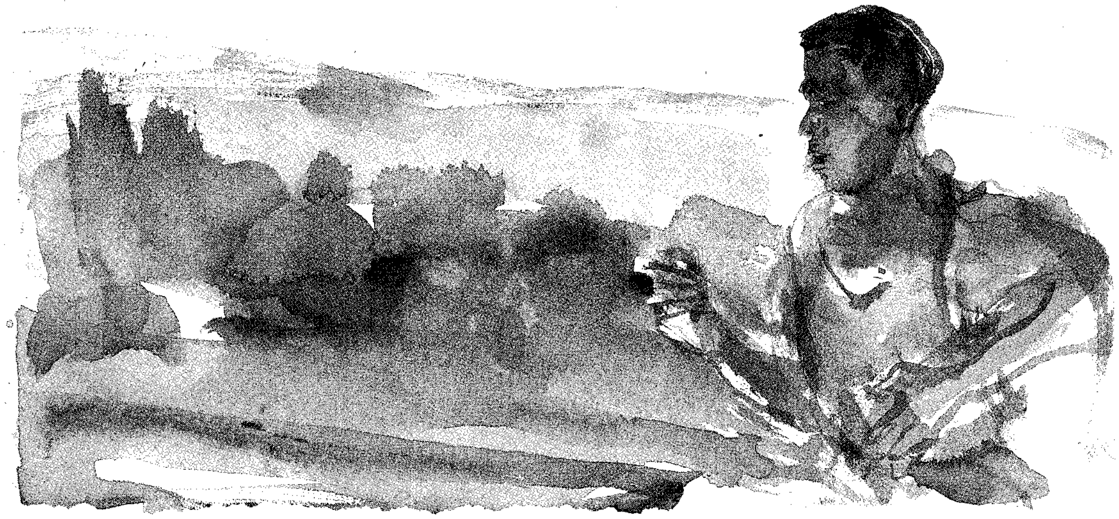
The Mummy—In the nineteen-twenties, in a fabled city in the sands of Egypt, in a hidden tomb, a beefy American adventurer named O'Connell (Brendan Fraser) goes looking for buried treasure. With him are a studious but sultry librarian (Rachel Weisz) and her dim but cowardly brother (John Hannah). We already know that the tomb is booby-trapped by all manner of ancient curses, and, soon enough, the massed ranks of special effects arrive to take revenge. Stephen Sommers's movie has the courage of its own clichés; he piles the silliness on with such speed that you don't have the time to notice how dead and dusty most of his themes are. The characters barely make it to two dimensions, and the Arab figures that crop up at regular intervals are a disgrace; this is the most unapologetically racist comedy that Hollywood has produced in a long while. What redeems it is the presence of Fraser, who is having a ball just now; after his subtle, unshowy performance in "Gods and Monsters," he now successfully demonstrates how to be lusty and affable at the same time.—*A.L.* (5/10/99) (Astor Plaza, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Olympia, Orpheum VII, Waverly, and Union Square.)

A Walk on the Moon—In a clannish Catskills bungalow colony, in the summer of 1969—Woodstock summer—Pearl (Diane Lane), a bored young Jewish housewife and mother, becomes convinced that she's lost a decade to mah-jongg and Waldbaum's and begins an affair with a handsome Gentile stranger (Viggo Mortensen) who's passing through. Her hardworking husband (Liev Schreiber), who was never told that sensuality should be part of a man's equipment, is appalled and fights back. In form, the movie is perhaps no more than a conventional triangle drama, but the milieu lends the material a special charm and interest. The actor Tony Goldwyn, directing his first movie, and working from a fine screenplay by Pamela Gray, beautifully captures a moment in which the straitened moral world of the lower-middle-class Jewish characters is beginning to open up—with necessarily painful results.—*D.D.* (4/12/99) (Gotham Cinema, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

The Wild Child (1970)—François Truffaut's passionate, tough-minded rendering of the case of the Wild Child of Aveyron (captured by huntsmen in 1798). Truffaut himself plays Dr. Jean Itard, directing the marvellously expressive Gypsy boy Jean-Pierre Cargol both behind and in front of the camera. Truffaut based the film on Itard's writings; he once said that the strength of the story is that everything the child does "he does for the first time"—he even "sneezes for the first time, and sheds his first tears." The filmmaker's triumph is that he makes everything new for the audience, too. There's something primal about the child on all fours, moaning with joy, as he hops back and forth in the rain—something far beyond words. But as well as the feral, euphoric pull of nature, Truffaut captures the healing power of Itard's rationalism. In French.—*M.S.* (Film Forum 2; starting May 18.)

The Winslow Boy—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Union Square.)

Xiu Xiu: The Sent Down Girl—The actor Joan Chen's directorial début is set during the grim period of rustication, in the nineteen-sixties, when millions of Chinese teen-agers were taken from their families and sent to work in the countryside. The virginal, stuck-up heroine, Xiu Xiu (Lu Lu), ends up in a deserted corner of western China sharing a tent with Lao Jin (Lopsang), a Tibetan horse herder. He's kind and manly, but because of some rotten luck twenty years ago he's not fully a man; meanwhile, in her desperation to get back home, Xiu Xiu begins to offer her body to local officials. The film takes a strangely old-fashioned view of sex, one that seems more Western than Chinese—there's even a crudely symbolic scene in which Xiu Xiu eats an apple, signifying her first step down the path of perdition. But the haunted landscape and the two natural leads bring the corny story to life; what starts out as a light coming-of-age tale hurtles toward its climax like a tragic opera. In Mandarin.—*Sarah Kerr* (Eastside Playhouse, Metro Cinema, and Village East Cinemas.)



Opening May 14, Haile Gebrselassie in Leslie Woodhead's "Endurance."

DEBORAH ROSS

ALSO PLAYING

ANALYZE THIS: Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **THE CASTLE:** Angelika Film Center, Cinema I, and Lincoln Square. . . . **CENTRAL STATION** (reviewed in our issue of 11/30/98): Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and The Screening Room. . . . **8½:** Paris. . . . **HIDEOUS KINKY:** Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema II, Metro Cinema, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **THE KING OF MASKS:** Cinema Village, First & 62nd Cinemas, and 34th Street Showplace. . . . **LIFE:** Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, State, and Union Square. . . . **LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL** (11/16/98 and 3/15/99): Angelika Film Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Guild, 72nd Street East, and 34th Street Showplace. . . . **LOCK, STOCK AND TWO SMOKING BARRELS** (3/8/99): Village Theatre VII. . . . **LOVERS OF THE ARCTIC CIRCLE:** Art Greenwich Twin and BAM Rose Cinemas. . . . **OPEN YOUR EYES:** Art Greenwich Twin and BAM Rose Cinemas. . . . **PUSHING TIN:** Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Village East Cinemas, and Ziegfeld. . . . **SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE** (12/21/98): Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Sutton, 34th Street Showplace, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **THE THIRD MAN** (1949): Film Forum. . . . **THIS IS MY FATHER:** 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, and 19th Street East 6. . . . **THREE SEASONS:** Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema I and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton I and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly I and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

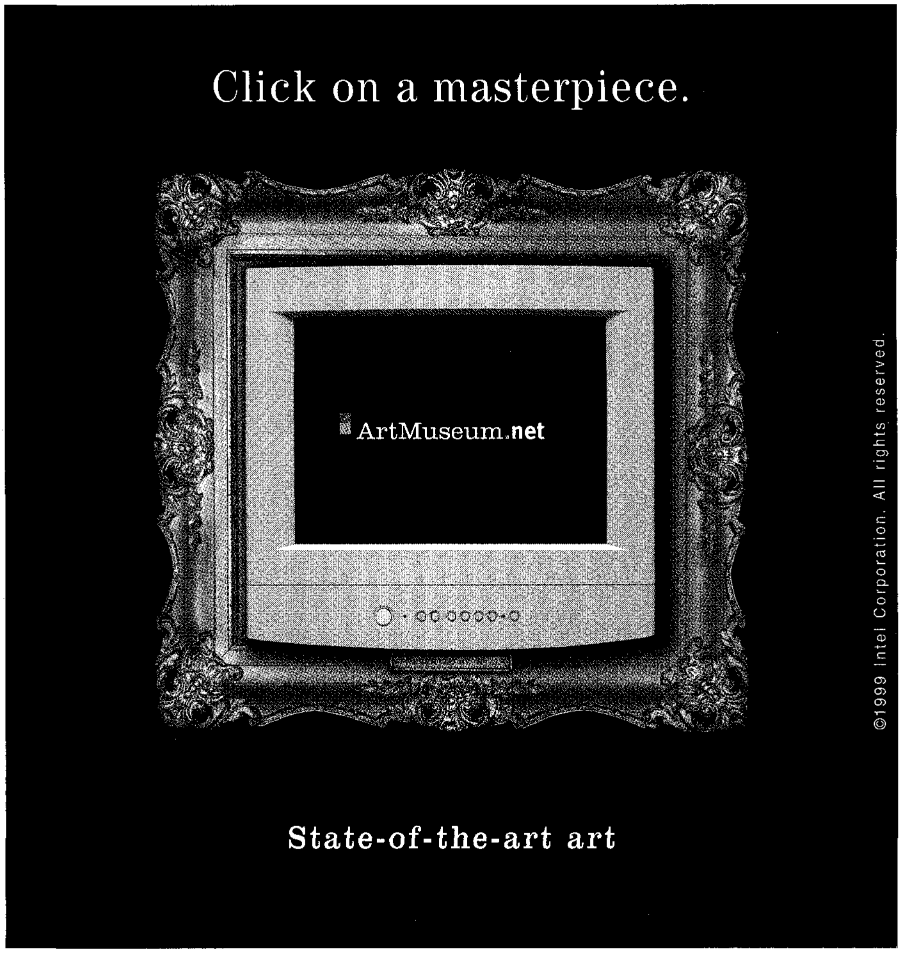
Film Forum 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Films directed by François Truffaut; in French, with English subtitles. Through May 16: "Jules and Jim" (1961). . . . From May 18: "The Wild Child" (†). . . . ¶ Two films by Harold Lloyd. May 17: "Safety Last" (1923) and "Movie Crazy" (1932).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A series of films directed by or about Alfred Hitchcock. May 13 at 2:30 and May 14 at 8: "Hitchcock, Selznick & the End of Hollywood" (1999, Michael Epstein). . . . May 13 at 6 and May 14 at 2:30: "Mr. and Mrs. Smith" (1941). . . . May 14 at 6 and May 17 at 2:30: "Suspicion" (1941). . . . May 15 at 1: "Foreign Correspondent" (1940). . . . May 15 at 3:30: "Rebecca" (1940). . . . May 15 at 6 and May 18 at 2:30: "Shadow of a Doubt" (1943). . . . May 16 at 2 and May 18 at 6: "Saboteur" (1942). . . . May 16 at 5: "Spellbound" (1945). . . . May 17 at 6: Three short British-government films made by Hitchcock, "Bon Voyage" (1944), "Aventure Malgache" (1944), and "The Memory of the Camps" (1945). . . . ¶ May 13 at 6: "New York City Diary" (1974, Howard Guttenplan) and "C'est Vrai" (1990, Robert Frank). . . . ¶ May 13 at 6:30 and May 14 at 3: "Roam Sweet Home" (1996, Ellen Spiro). . . . ¶ Films featuring Ann Sothern. May 14 at 6: "A Letter to Three Wives" (1949, Joseph L. Mankiewicz). . . . May 14 at 8 and May 18 at 3: "The Whales of August" (1987, Lindsay Anderson). . . . May 15 at 1: "Lady in a Cage" (1964, Walter Graumann). . . . May 15 at 3: "The Killing Kind" (1973, Curtis Harrington). . . . May 15 at 5: "The Sharpest Girl in Town" (1999, Mike Kaplan), a documentary about Sothern; and "Maisie Was a Lady" (1941, Edward L. Marin). . . . May 16 at 1: "Shadow on the Wall" (1950, Patrick Jackson). . . . May 16 at 3: "Folies Bergère" (1935, Roy Del Ruth). . . . May 16 at 5: "Lady Be Good" (1941, Norman Z. McLeod). . . . May 17 at 3: "Maisie Gets Her Man" (1942, Del Ruth).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—"Bunco: The Art of the Con," a series of films focussing on the con game. May 12 at 2 and May 13 at 4: "Nothing Sacred" (1937, William Wellman). . . . May 12 at 3:40 and May 13 at 2: "The Lady Eve" (1941, Preston Sturges). . . . May 14 at 2 and 7 and May 15 at 6:40: "The Music Man" (1962, Morton DaCosta). . . . May 14 at 4:50 and 9:30 and May 15 at 4:30 and 9:30: "Yolanda and the Thief" (1945, Vincente Minnelli). . . . May 16 at 4 and 8:15: "The Fortune Cookie" (1966, Billy Wilder). . . . May 16 at 6:25: "The Producers" (1968, Mel Brooks). . . . May 17 at 2, 5:20, and 8:40: "Blonde Crazy" (1931, Roy Del Ruth). . . . May 17 at 3:40 and 7: "The Mind Reader" (1933, Del Ruth). . . . May 18 at 2: "High Pressure" (1932, Mervyn LeRoy). . . . May 18 at 3:40 and 8:30: "I Love You Again" (1940, W. S. Van Dyke).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Fred Astaire films. May 15 at 2: "Top Hat" (1935, Mark Sandrich). . . . May 15 at 4:30: "Swing Time" (1936, George Stevens). . . . May 16 at 2: "Shall We Dance" (1937, Sandrich). . . . May 16 at 4: "Follow the Fleet" (1936, Sandrich).

Museum of Television and Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Alfred Hitchcock's television work, featuring three episodes based on Roald Dahl stories: "Lamb to the Slaughter" (†), "Dip in the Pool" (1958), and "Mrs. Bixby and the Colonel's Coat" (1960). May 13-14 at 6 and May 15-16 at 2.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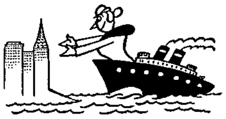
THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT

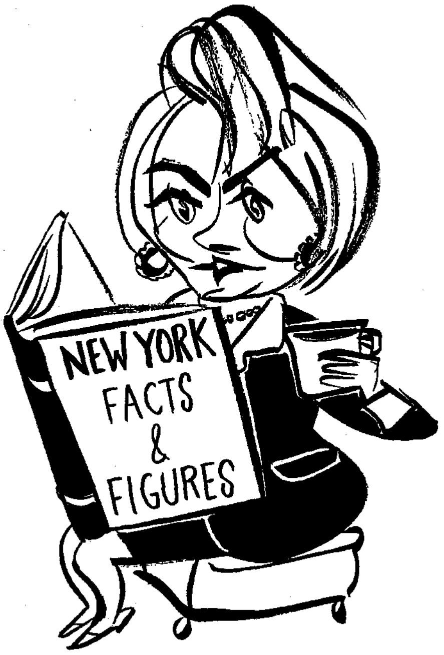
Capitol Hillary.



EVEN as it goes nowhere, Hillary Clinton's Senate campaign continues to make progress. Last week, the First Lady was once again in New York, where she participated in an A.F.L.-C.I.O. women's forum in Buffalo, among other activities. It was her third trip to the state in as many weeks, and, like the others, it was indistinguishable from a campaign swing except, of course, that she is not a candidate—or, at least, not yet. Mrs. Clinton's reticence about her plans has made even slight gestures on her part seem suggestive—her presumptuous use of the word "we" when referring to New Yorkers, her photogenic sharing of a private joke with the New York City Schools Chancellor, Rudy Crew—and on some level she is clearly toying with the electorate. But no one who has followed her in this period of deliberation could accuse her of taking the decision lightly.

Mrs. Clinton has approached her potential candidacy, which began as a puckish suggestion from Senator Bob Torricelli, of New Jersey, on "Meet the Press," back in January, as a subject for intense and earnest examination. As she started to work her way through Harold Ickes' Rolodex, making exploratory phone calls, distinctly minor New York officials suddenly found themselves summoned by the White House switchboard. David Alpert, the Westchester County Democratic chairman, spoke with her for nearly an hour, and, like many others she has sought out, he was impressed by the scope of her inquiries. "She was curious about why there was a large Jordanian population in Yonkers," he told the *Times*, in amazement. "I did not know the answer."

In her recent travels around the state, Mrs. Clinton has exhibited a similarly dutiful interest in the details of its politics and geography. During one of her visits, she sat through the entire, grindingly dull program of the New York State Democratic Party's Jefferson-Jackson dinner, clapping enthusiastically for achievements that included electing one Democrat to the Suffolk County Legislature and two to the Village of Hempstead Board of Trustees. During another visit, she told reporters that they might be "surprised" by some of the crops that "are actually grown right here in New York."



Mrs. Clinton's effort to connect with New Yorkers by boning up on the state's lesser-known vegetables fits, almost too well, the public perception of her as a policy wonk extraordinaire—the type of person who could present a thirteen-hundred-page health-care bill to Congress and regret only that she hadn't been more thorough. This image of her has not changed even when circumstances have. On more than one occasion, the meticulously prepared First Lady has been made to appear out of touch on matters of considerable personal significance, like the whereabouts of those billing records that mysteriously materialized in the White House living quarters.

As Hillary Clinton considers a run for the Senate next year, her conscientiousness is again at odds with the circumstances: what she is contemplating is a classic example of what actual New Yorkers like to call chutzpah. She has already been accused of carpetbagging, and, given the hostile nature of New York elections, if she runs she will probably be charged with much worse. No amount of research into the distribution of ethnic minorities in lower Westchester is going to alter that fact.

Right now, her poll numbers in New York aren't bad, but they aren't particularly good, either. The past several weeks have been far and away the roughest of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's career, yet surveys suggest that, despite the almost daily protests against him, his standing in a hypothetical matchup with Mrs. Clinton has improved. This trend confirms a basic rule about politics: candidates tend to be most desirable when they are least available (think Colin Powell).

There is reason to believe that in Mrs. Clinton's case this effect would be particularly punishing. As the health-care-plan fiasco demonstrated, public opinion is easily turned against her when she tries to exert her formidable will on behalf of a cause she sup-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

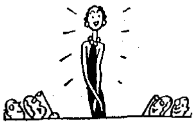
ports. Indeed, in our not yet fully emancipated times, it has never been what she did but, rather, what she didn't do—fall apart, leave her husband—that has made her popular.

Of course, it's possible that the First Lady can escape this bind. Her political commitment is, by all accounts, genuine, and she may yet find a role that is somewhere between *Vogue*-cover wife and Beltway shrew—a third way, as it were. But one of Mrs. Clinton's most striking characteristics is the curious way she keeps being made over without ever really changing.

—ELIZABETH KOLBERT

DEPT. OF ICONS

A little bit of Audrey for everyone.



IT wasn't breakfast at Tiffany's, but one recent evening, across the street at Bergdorf Goodman, they were passing around champagne and hors d'œuvres in celebration of a new book entitled "Audrey Style." Audrey Hepburn, whose regal neck and doe eyes—not to mention twenty-inch waist—were the envy of every woman, would have turned seventy last week. The birthdays of late, lamented icons provide the perfect marketing opportunity for misty-eyed reappraisals, and Pamela Clarke Keogh, the author of "Audrey Style," seated at a table amid the department store's cosmetics counters, couldn't sign copies of her gorgeous-looking book fast enough.

Billy Wilder, who directed the actress in "Sabrina," once remarked, "This girl, single-handedly, may make bosoms a thing of the past." And, after spotting her in her first major movie, "Roman Holiday" (for which she won an Academy Award for best actress), women rushed to copy every aspect of her guileless style, from her breezy haircut to her white cotton shirts with the sleeves rolled up. Still, Hepburn was known to refer to herself—with the entrancing modesty that was as much a trademark as her ballet flats—as "just a skinny broad."

Keogh's book is short on substance and a bit muddled on the details (did Hepburn wear a size-8½ shoe? or was it a size 10?), but it is gratifyingly long on photographs, fashion sketches, and gushing print-bites. The word "grace" appears on about every third page, and we learn that the determinedly svelte actress (Hepburn, who was five feet seven, kept her weight at a firm hundred and ten pounds) liked pasta and an occasional chocolate fix. Of course, she had trained as a dancer, which gave her enviable posture in addition to a formidable will. ("She's disciplined, like all those ballet dames," Humphrey Bogart is quoted as saying.)

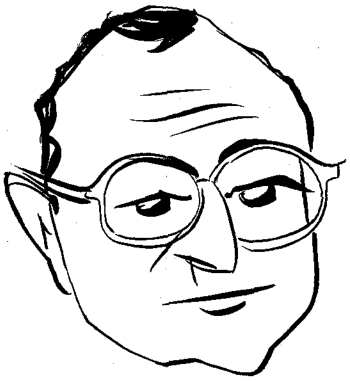
"Audrey Style," published by HarperCollins, contains the briefest of introductions—no more than an imprimatur, really—by the reclusive Hubert de Givenchy, the seventy-two-year-old couturier who helped create Hepburn's signature style, beginning with "Sabrina." In 1953, he agreed to see her in his Paris atelier, under the misapprehension that she was Katharine Hepburn; since he was busy preparing a collection, she whisked through his workrooms, plucking outfits off the racks. They became lifelong friends, and whether Audrey Hepburn's sophisticated-schoolgirl look owes everything to Givenchy or is a reflection of her own taste, as well, is the stuff of bitchy speculation.

At Bergdorf, the crowd dined on miniature hot dogs, Roquefort-covered

POSTSCRIPT

Remembering a Renaissance human.

TWO years ago, the historian Daniel Boorstin, who was then eighty-two, delivered a lecture to an audience of young computer experts, entertainment experts, and design experts. The talk celebrated what Boorstin called "the amateur spirit."



Tibor Kalman

According to Boorstin, "The rewards and refreshments of thought and the arts come from the courage to try something, all sorts of things, for the first time. An enamored amateur need not be a genius to stay out of ruts he has never been trained in. . . . In the long run, the ruts wear away, and adventuring amateurs reward us by a wonderful vagrancy into the unexpected."

Today, Boorstin's words read like an epitaph for a man who happened to have attended that 1997 lecture. Tibor Kalman, who perfectly embodied that brave, ferocious, big-hearted amateur spirit, died last week of cancer.

Tibor, whom everyone called Tibor (partly, I think, because it's a fun word to say—his son's middle name, after all, is Onomatopoeia), was not yet fifty. Nevertheless, he managed to distinguish himself in more careers in twenty-five years than any dozen other people do in fifty. The Tibor Kalman aesthetic DNA lives and flourishes all over the place, in the work of his former protégés and of people he influenced but never met.

His nominal job description was graphic designer, and his legendary design firm, M&Co, was a truly communistic entity—a collective filled with subversive spirit and run by a charismatic, sometimes infuriating dictator. (This isn't just metaphorical: although his parents escaped Communist Hungary in 1956, when Tibor was seven, more than a decade later he joined S.D.S., and until he died he remained a kind of Yippie-ish, Euro-style socialist.) Although he had no formal design training, he was the art director of *Artforum* and of *Interview*—yet it was the M&Co ideas that became so influential, the most important of those ideas being a kind of impudent, life-affirming irony. In the eighties, he and M&Co helped transform the palette of sophisticated design by incorporating charmingly unsophisticated images and typefaces—sometimes faux-naïf ones, walnuts on slices of Granny Smith apples, and raspberry tartlets, a menu that was supposedly inspired by Hepburn's favorite foods. It's hard to believe that the actress, who considered herself "chubby" when she ballooned to a hundred and thirty pounds, actually ate enough food to have favorites. But Keogh insists that Hepburn "ate a lot," and credits her skinniness to that most maddening of all explanations, "great metabolism."

Explaining why she decided to do a Hepburn book, Keogh said, "She is as vital and present today as she was years ago." Sure enough, the windows of Bergdorf were filled with Audrey-stylish spring fashions, and the store is selling a hundred-and-seventy-five-dollar pink satin evening clutch filled with makeup by Prescriptives—"for people who don't read," as Keogh says. (It was going to be called the "Funny Face Kit" until the people at Paramount, who own the rights to the film, got wind of it.) Surrounded by a sea of young women in sleeveless Hepburn-like sheaths, I found it hard not to wonder what the actress, who preferred her Swiss farmhouse to the swirl of show business, and who spent her last years working on behalf of UNICEF, would have made of all the glamour and greed attached to the use of her name. Picturing her here is difficult—it's much easier to see her as Holly Golightly, that soigné waif, staring in at the windows of Tiffany.

—DAPHNE MERKIN

NEW HAMPSHIRE POSTCARD

Elizabeth Dole meanders off her mark.

ELIZABETH DOLE delivered by far the most successful speech at the 1996 Republican National Convention, according to a group of independent voters assembled by the

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as with the retro menus and matchbooks they designed for the Manhattan diner Florent, and sometimes the real thing, as with the primitive Howard Finster painting they put on the cover of "Little Creatures," by the Talking Heads.

Tibor also became an influential product designer. His brand of humor and outrageousness (combined, winningly, with an almost neoclassical Jack Benny restraint) were even rarer in industrial design than in graphics, and the famous M&Co wristwatches and clock faces with randomly ordered numbers still sell all over the world. "A little fucked up" was to him a prime aesthetic virtue.

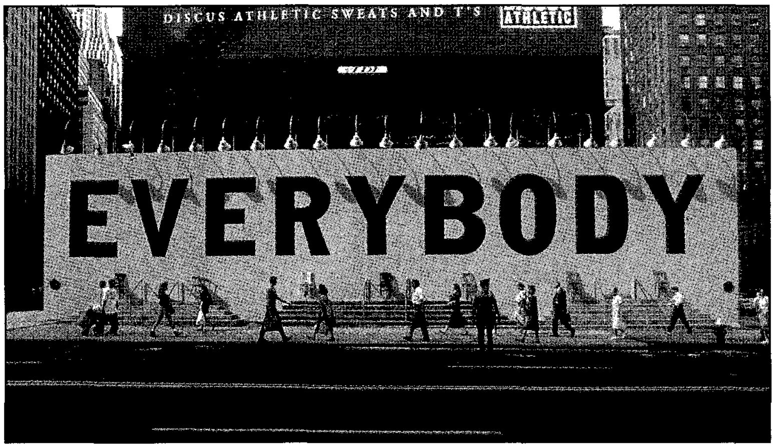
Then he became an influential filmmaker, creating a music video and a film-credit sequence and a TV ad that pioneered the use of animated type. After that, he became an influential conjurer of three-dimensional places as well: as part of the official Times Square redevelopment effort, it was his vision of the neighborhood—an energetic jumble of hyperbolic signs and shops, an authentic renaissance of the raucous spirit of the place—that, a decade ago, finally won out over the prettier, well-behaved corporate visions. And, finally, in the nineties, he became an editor, creating the quixotic, smart, photo-driven magazine *Colors*, for Benetton.

Tibor turned his professional life into an obstacle course, a risky, high-spirited game of perpetual amateurism in the best Boorstinian sense. Last spring, I spent hours talking with him for the afterword of a book about his work ("Tibor Kalman: Perverse Optimist"; Princeton Architectural Press, 1998). "The smartest way to work is to not quite know what you're doing," he told me. "I've done two commercials in my life; I don't want to do three. I did two of a number of things. The first one, you fuck it up in an interesting way; the second one, you get it right; and then you're out of there. If you keep changing occupations, keep changing projects, you can attain a kind of incredible ecstasy of learning."

He wasn't finished. "I'd like to make Channel 13 documentaries, one about bike messengers. I've always wanted to make products carry messages that were beyond a logo. A museum of contemporary anthropology—that's an example of something I'd love to do. I don't understand why there couldn't be a three-dimensional kind of literary museum."

In his last months, as he resigned himself to the fact that he wouldn't make it to the next millennium, he remained stalwartly amused and amusing, charmed and charming, liberated and liberating. He died at forty-nine, yet he really did believe in leaving the party while it was still hopping, as he demonstrated in his impulsive decision to close M&Co, in 1993, at the height of its prosperity. As Tibor put it, "My philosophy is 'Let's leave at midnight.'"

—KURT ANDERSEN



In 1993, Kalman and M&Co erected a giant, chair-studded billboard on Forty-second Street. The sign hung graffiti-free for a two-year run.

MAGGIE HOPP/COURTESY OF M&CO

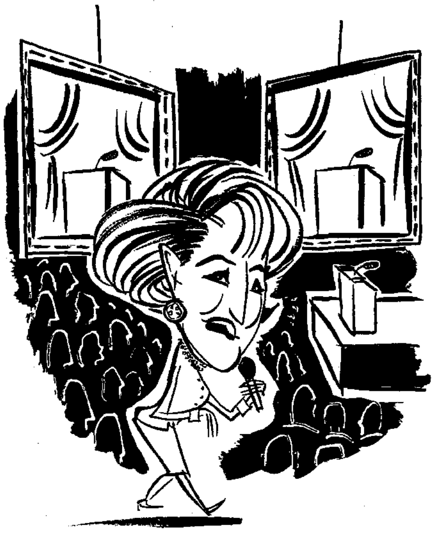
pollster Frank Luntz. She burst the shackles of the podium and wandered out among the crowd, wearing a bright peach-colored suit and a wireless microphone. This conveyed the illusion of informality, a quality not normally associated with the famously fastidious Mrs. Dole. As for the content—well, there wasn't much. But Luntz's group, bored by partisan podium pounders, loved it.

The walkabout was such a success that Dole, who is running for President herself this year, has adopted it as her campaign signature. She does it all the time, and it has become a truly distracting conceit—like Lamar Alexander's red-and-black plaid shirt and oddly punctuated posters ("Lamar!") in 1996—especially when Dole has something serious to say, which was certainly the case at the New Hampshire Republican Party's Campaign 2000 kickoff dinner last week in Manchester.

Eight of the eleven likely Republican candidates for President were hustled on and off the stage that evening, given seven humiliating minutes each to share their visions with an audience of Party activists. It is difficult to emerge from such an event undiminished; serious candidates are treated exactly the same as the inevitable political flotsam running vanity campaigns. A smart candidate will rehearse platitudes, attack the other party, smile, and scoot. A really smart candidate will figure out an excuse to be elsewhere (as did George W. Bush, of Texas, John McCain, of Arizona, and Pat Buchanan, of CNN).

But Elizabeth Dole, who is running second to Bush in most of the early polling, decided to use the dinner to challenge the state's notoriously armament-loving Republicans by announcing that she is in favor of certain forms of gun control. This seemed at once desperate, brave, and odd, although it might have seemed less odd if she had taken her stand standing—in one place, firm and visible. Unfortunately, she was out wandering. Most of the audience couldn't see her. (The large TV projection screens scattered throughout the hall showed an empty podium.) Mrs. Dole's garden-club cadences seemed disembodied. "Drugs aren't cool," she said. "They kill." And then, as if she expected applause for the shrewdness of the formulation, she said it again. Then she moved on to the gun-control part of the program. She said that she was in favor of continuing the assault-weapon ban. And was against cop-killer bullets. And in favor of gun locks. (At which point, a lone boo, or maybe two.) "Yes," she repeated, "safety locks on guns to protect our children." The room's temperature had cooled noticeably.

One wonders what the impact of such positions would have been had they been delivered from the authority of a lectern. As it was, the audience appeared to be more discombobulated (where *was* she, anyway?) than provoked or inspired. Her "courage" seemed a ploy. The antic choreography diluted whatever sincerity might have been lurking in the appeal.



Elizabeth Dole

None of the other hopefuls had anything memorable to say that night. The two most effective candidates were the miniature religious activist Gary Bauer, who spoke passionately about the events in Littleton, Colorado; and Lamar Alexander, who cleverly finessed the armament lovers by confessing himself a teen-age pocketknife carrier. All his friends in Maryville, Tennessee, apparently were, too. But they never used them on one another during recess, because they had . . . values. (Values are cool, they don't kill.)

Against all rational expectations, Alexander bears watching. He has strong grassroots organizations in both Iowa and New Hampshire. In addition, as a sign of his seriousness, he has ditched his plaid shirt and his exclamation point, a lesson that Elizabeth Dole might ponder the next time she's tempted to go wandering off into an audience.

—JOE KLEIN

ANY OLD STONE

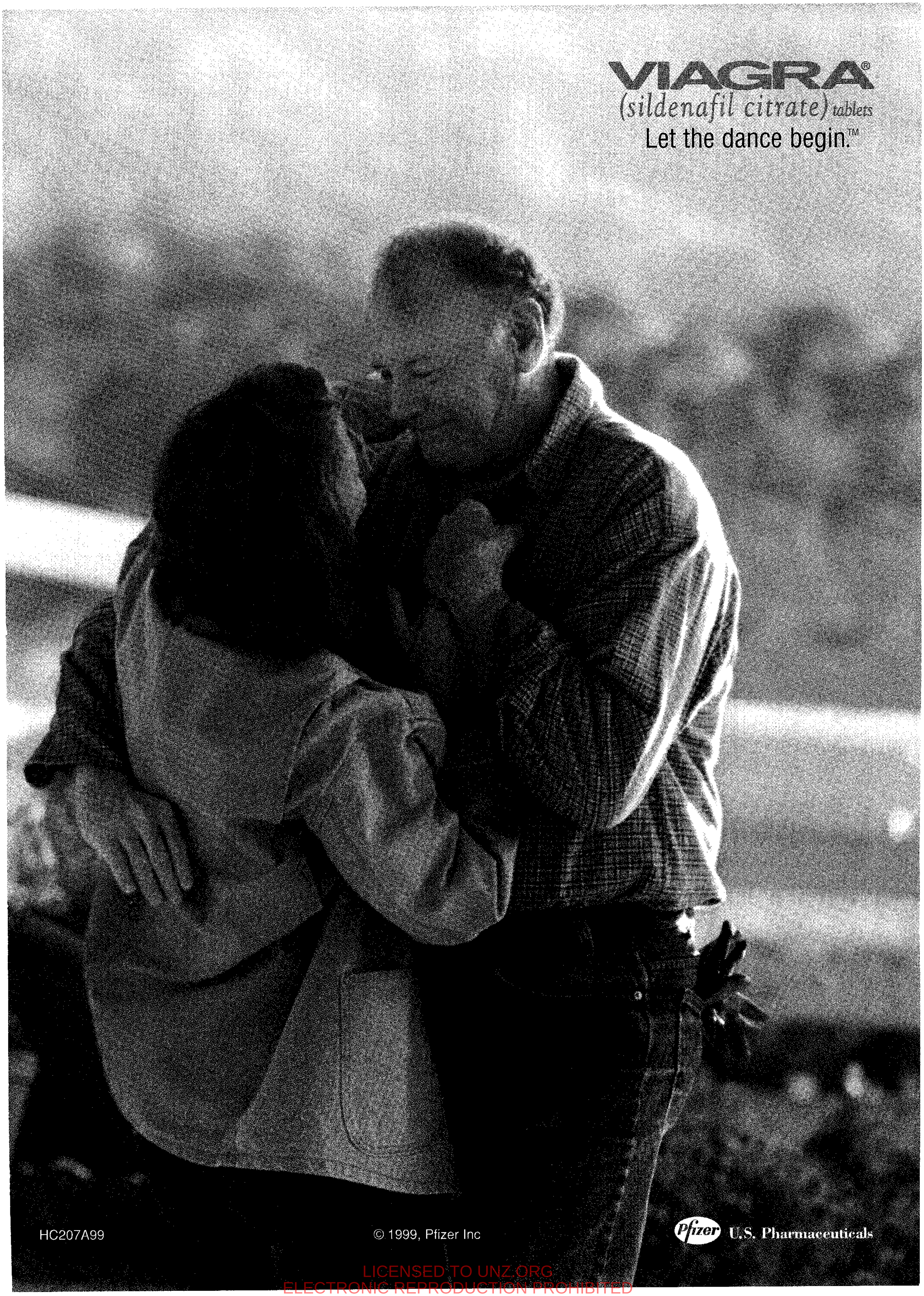
Don't knock a stone: don't say things like
  "stone dead."
A stone always knows what it's about.
It holds itself together better than you do,
better than I do. A stone is comfortable
with its battery of cunning smithereens
milling around, bouncing off one another
exactly right in their tight little compound.

Any old stone—you think it can't talk?
Dumb old stone? Ho! Every atom in it talks,
every part of every atom talks. Just listen.

Trust your eyes and ears to recognize your
grandmother. A stone doesn't need eyes and
ears to know what's coming down the pike.

A stone knows what it wants, and gets it,
pressing up tight against the fluffy surrounds,
all that space made of the same stuff as the
  stone stuff.
Don't knock a stone: it'll show you up,
put you down, cover you up, forget you.

—PAUL LAWSON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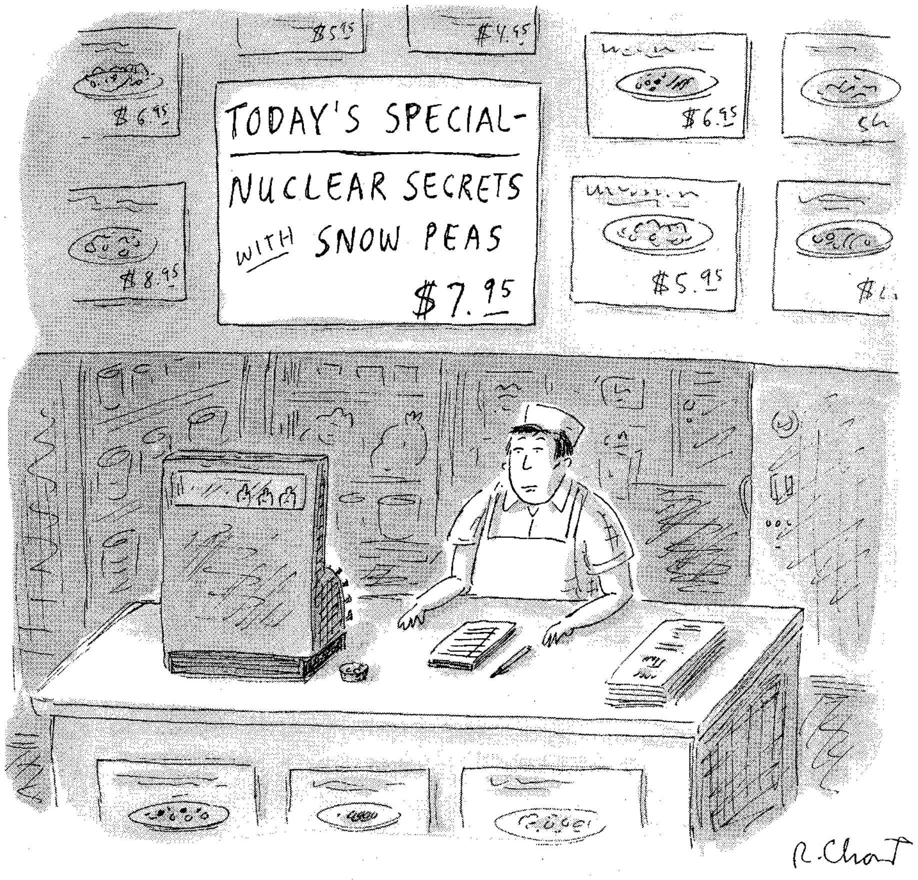
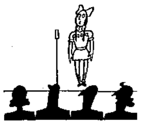


DEPT. OF HOOPLA

A group of Manhattan alumnae are true to their school.



BREARLEY, the hundred-and-fifteen-year-old private school for girls, put on a musical revue called "Brearley on Broadway" last week in Avery Fisher Hall (no less), where everybody, onstage and off, pleasantly exhibited an intense, all-encompassing passion for the school. The show had mostly professional elements—songs and music by Brearley Fathers Irving Berlin, Leonard Bernstein, Frank Loesser, and Richard Rodgers, by special permission of their mostly Brearley-affiliated kin, including Mary Ellin Berlin Barrett, '44; Nina Bernstein, '80; Jamie Bernstein Thomas, '70; Jo Sullivan Loesser; Emily Loesser Stephenson, '83; Linda Rodgers Emory, '53; and Mary Rodgers Guettel, '48. It was co-directed by Brearley Mother Carole Rothman and Brearley Father Jerry Zaks. It was written by Brearley Friend Wendy Wasserstein (Calhoun, '67) and choreographed by Brearley Friend Susan Stroman. The cast of actors, singers, and dancers was entirely pro, except for the school's fourth and twelfth graders, who appeared as themselves.

The show even had a kind of Peggy Siegel-like communications director, Jo David (Brearley, '61), who provided careful guidance to a full understanding and appreciation of the Brearley Zeitgeist, to wit: the school song is entitled "By Truth and Toil"; the Brearley colors are red and white; the benefit had raised four hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the school's performing-arts programs.

A number of women in the audience were in red and white. Mary Rodgers Guettel, whose granddaughter will be in the Brearley class of 2012, had on an elegant red satin pants suit under a white satin coat, and red satin pointy slippers. "Brearley always did something for me," she said, breathless with excitement about the latest Brearley experience. "I was miserable at home. Brearley made my life." She went on, "It's not what I learned. Brearley made me fearless."

"I'm infected with it," Liza Lee (Brearley, '61) said. "I'm now headmistress at Hockaday School for girls, in Dallas. Wherever I go, there's a Brearley connection. There are only three degrees of separation instead of six—no, only two degrees—when it comes to Brearley. I wouldn't have missed this for anything."

The evening was m.c.'d by Brearley Friend Marlo Thomas (Marymount High). Between the great, for-free songs, she talked about the school's commitment to innovations in education. Some new curriculum offerings, she deadpanned, included "Senior Seminar: Deconstructing Kate Spade; or, The Myth of the Square Tote Bag." Then there was "Lower School English: The Picaresque Hero as Exemplified by New York sightings of Leonardo DiCaprio."

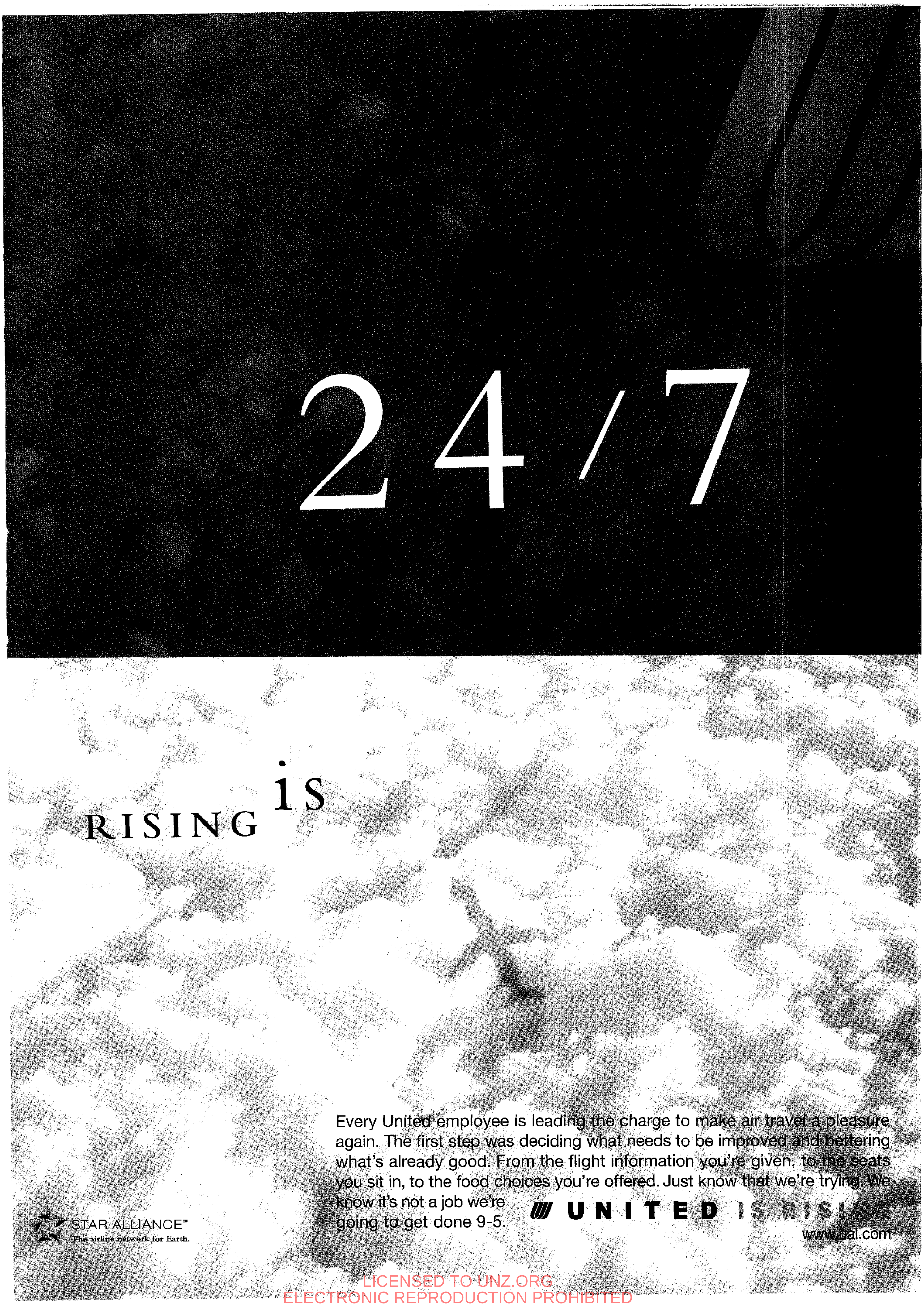
At one point in the revue, Swoosie Kurtz (Hollywood High, '62) came out as the school nurse, lecturing on how great it is to be a woman and how wonderful it is to be yourself, which led logically enough to Frank Loesser's "The Ugly Duckling," sung by Ms. Thomas. The subject of a Brearley woman's intelligence, wit, and dignity as a threat to men was dealt with by Betty Comden (Brooklyn's Erasmus Hall, '33), who sang Leonard Bernstein's "One Hundred Easy Ways" (lyrics by Comden and Green):

> Now the first way to lose a man—
> You've met a charming fellow and
>   you're out for a spin.
> The motor fails and he just wears a
>   helpless grin.
> Don't bat your eyes and say,
> "What a romantic spot we're in."
> Just get out, crawl under the car, tell
>   him it's the gasket, and fix it in
>   two seconds flat with a bobby pin.

Leslie Uggams (Professional Children's School, '60) clinched things with Berlin's "You're Just in Love." And, for the grand finale, the seniors, all in white graduation dresses, came up to the stage through the aisles of the theatre, each getting a rose from a fourth grader. The audience sobbed and cheered.

At a reception afterward, Wendy Wasserstein, holding her own bunch of roses, stood beaming. Mary Rodgers Guettel was beaming, too. "There's never been anything like it," she said. She looked serene. "What a pleasure!" Wasserstein said. "To work with those four great composers!"

—LILLIAN ROSS



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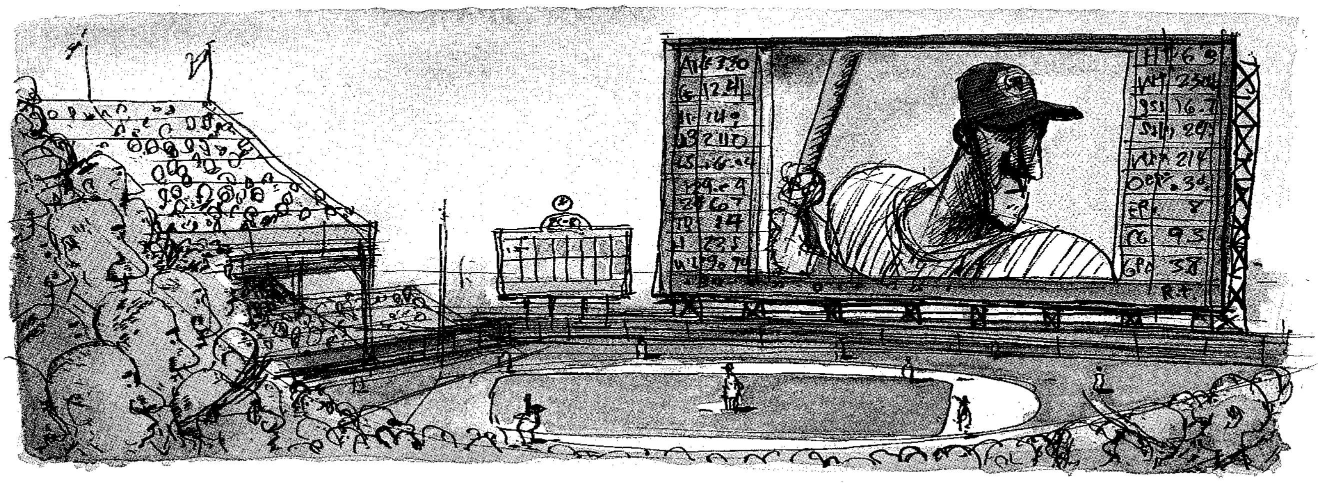
THE SPORTING SCENE

ARE WE HAVING FUN YET?

Baseball just can't seem to stop taking note of itself.

BY ROGER ANGELL

BARE moments after the start of a Tigers-Yankees game on a sunny Saturday last month at the Stadium, it came to me that we might be in on another baseball record: The leadoff batter for the visitors, left fielder Juan Encarnacion, tapped a soft bouncer to first baseman Tino Martinez, who made the play unassisted. The Yankee pitcher was Roger Clemens, the R.V.-size, five-time Cy Young Award winner, who was making his initial appearance in pinstripes after the startling late-winter trade with the Toronto Blue Jays which had brought him aboard in exchange for David Wells and two lesser teammates, but the mote of history I had just perceived wasn't about the Rocket. Entering the out in the top left-hand corner of my scorecard, I had a glimmering flashback to the previous afternoon and the drizzly celebrations of the home Opening Day for the World Champions. After Yogi Berra had thrown out the ritual first pitch, David Cone took over the mound and shortly plunked Tiger leadoff man Frank Catalanotto, in the back, giving him a free pass to first. Recalling the trifling moment, I fished in my notebook and got out that earlier scorecard, just to make sure. Yes. Unfamiliarity had made me careful about the spellings when I wrote "Catalanotto" and "Encarnacion" into my lineups (sorry, guys), but here it was before me, a possible record: "Most successive visiting-team lead-off batters (A.L.) with different eleven-letter names: 2."



Modern big-leaguers play within a surrounding cloud of statistics and records—the ultimate distraction from the game.

RICHARD THOMPSON

You could look it up.

Commemorative baseball is the going thing. A few days later, during a Yankees-Orioles game (this time I was watching on television), attention was paid when Clay Bellinger, a thirty-year-old rookie filling in at third base for the Yanks, rapped a double to left field, to record his first major-league hit after ten years in the profession. Third-base coach Willie Randoph called for the ball and stuck it in his pocket—a keepsake for Bellinger's mantel. Nice moment. In the seventh inning, when Paul O'Neill hammered a three-run homer into the right-center-field bleachers, to put the Yanks ahead by 12–7, we were told that the middle run represented Paulie's thousandth lifetime run batted in. Yay. After the game ended, I switched over to check up on the Mets-Marlins affair at Shea Stadium, just in time to watch John Franco record his four-hundredth major-league save. Wow—I mean this, for Franco is a favorite of mine, and everybody else's, as is O'Neill. When John was interviewed on the field, he was asked whether he thought he might catch the legendary and now retired Lee Smith, whose four hundred and seventy-eight saves are the most ever. He said you never know. Then, the very next morning, I saw that Jose Canseco, who plays for the Tampa Bay Devil Rays these days, had just smacked his four-hundredth home run—not a happy event for him, it seemed. "If I hadn't been injured so much in my career, I'd be looking at five hundred home runs right now," he said.

On a more recent night (we're almost done with this), Roger Clemens was knocked about by the Rangers, down in Texas, giving up five runs in the first inning—a matter of concern not just for the Yankees but because he was going after his eighteenth straight victory, to break the all-time American League mark set by Baltimore's Dave McNally and Cleveland's Johnny Allen. Clemens got off the hook, however, when the Yankees fought back doggedly and, with a final two runs in the ninth, pulled out a 7–6 win. The preservation of the Clemens statistic was nearly as much news, as I heard it, as the amazing turnabout or a stout relief appearance by Hideki Irabu. I felt the same way. Like so many fans now, I had been following the numbers almost more than the action: watching myself watch the game.

Records and number-keeping have always been a unique part of baseball's attraction, but we are in new territory here. Last year's ravishing, summerlong bash-out between Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa, which culminated in McGwire's record seventy home runs, entirely outstripped the one-sided pennant races, as did the Yankees' amazing run of victories. Their hundred and twenty-five wins—a total combining a hundred and fourteen victories in the regular season with eleven more in the three tiers of post-season play (they went 11–2 in October)—make them the official Best Team Ever. The three words even appear on the chunky World Series rings that were ceremoniously handed out to the championship Yankee players the other day. I have that number by heart now, as does every fan, and I have to confess that it's beginning to blur my memory of how these Yankees actually played: how well they pitched and defended and batted from day to day; how great they really were. Last fall, manager Joe Torre warned us about making too much of the record, for just this reason.

Now, with the May weather, homers are flying once again, and we fans are looking for ways to keep count, as before. McGwire and Sosa have been slow off the blocks, but whenever Mac emerges from his slump, as he will, we'll see his 1999 homers matched against his totals for the same day a year ago, along with another box adjoining his place on the roster of the all-time home-run sluggers. He's in twentieth place, with four hundred and sixty-three, but a standard (standard for him) fifty-six-homer year, say, would move him up to twelfth, just behind Ted Williams and Willie McCovey. A niche up among the top three—Hank Aaron's seven hundred and fifty-five, Babe Ruth's seven hundred and fourteen, and Willie Mays's six hundred and sixty—is perhaps out of reach for McGwire, who is thirty-five, but we smart, number-gluttonous fans are keeping an eye on the Mariners' Ken Griffey, Jr., who has hit fifty-six homers in each of the past two seasons; he began this season with three hundred and fifty lifetime dingers, but he's only twenty-nine. Quick, let's look and see what Junior did last night. Or should we stick with the disgruntled Canseco, who is cooling down after ten round-trippers in twenty games? Will this turn into a famous year for him? For Mark and Sammy again? For baseball? Is everybody having fun?

PATCHES of sunshine have broken through this digit haze. In Havana, late in March, a lineup of Cuban stars played the Baltimore Orioles in a historic exhibition, and took the big-leaguers into the eleventh inning before going down by 3–2. Seen over television, the players on the local nine appeared frail in comparison with the muscled-up, moneyed-up professionals, and the crowd of baseball-mad Habaneros, perhaps fearing a blowout, appeared anxious until a rally by the Proletarians tied up the game at 2–2 in the ninth, and brought out flags and bongos and *cincos altos* all over the handsome green park. Commissioner Bud Selig, sitting in a front-row box with Fidel Castro, looked ecstatic amid the Cohiba-smoke haze, as well he might. This symbolic little game of one-o'-cat, which appeared to be doomed by politics almost up to the moment of the first pitch, had been his baby all along. In a rematch, played in Baltimore last week, the Cubans rapped out eighteen hits in the course of a 12–6 bashing of the languid O's.

Another campaign by Major League Baseball, to restore the blowsy strike zone to a semblance of its once fetching silhouette, produced a not unexpected groan or horselaugh when the umpires, through their union chief, Richie Phillips, filed a labor grievance over such meddlings. But the umpires' contract is up for renewal after this season, and the prospect of enforced retirement for some senior umps, when taken with the unspoken embarrassment over slovenly calls which is felt by the better practitioners (that's to say, the majority), may yet bring results. The old armpits-to-top-of-the-knees strike range hasn't been in practice for a decade or more, and the suggested new box calls for a topline two inches above the batter's belt, and stricter calls at the sides of the plate—this last in hopes of expunging those airy horizontal expanses that some umps have been calling "my strike zone." Batters and pitchers have been diplomatic in their appraisals of the results to date, but they must court good relations with the individual umpires at all times. To my eye, the higher strike is again being rung up here and there, though not yet on a level that might bring Jim Palmer out of retirement. In the structure of things, this change is the equivalent of ending acid rain.

The ceremonials at Turner Field, in Atlanta, marking the quarter-century anniversary of Hank Aaron's seven hundred and fifteenth home run—the Ruth-buster—were notably joyful, but Aaron has not yet been given his full due. His

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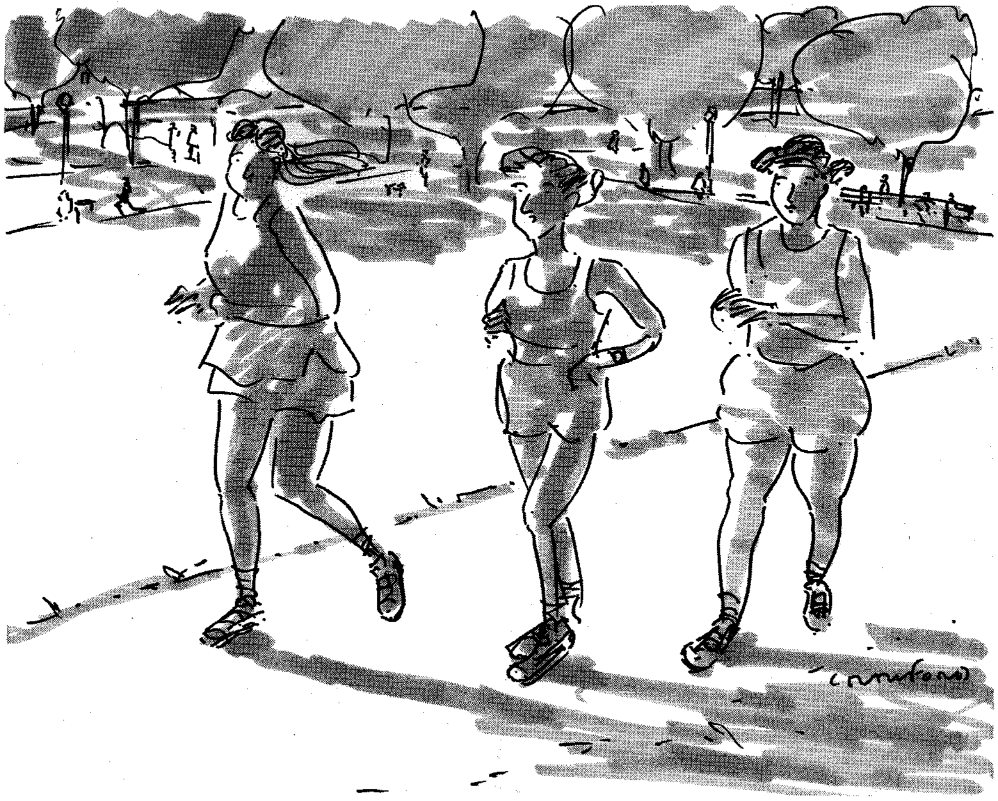
seven hundred and fifty-five lifetime homers is the least noticed grand achievement in sports, and his other all-time marks—most runs batted in, most total bases—also hold a mysterious anonymity, as if they were out of view. Has it been noticed, I wonder, that Junior Griffey's lifetime homers, cited above, are less than half of the Aaron figure, or that Stan Musial, who holds second place in total bases, is more than *twelve miles* down the track? We remain oblivious, perhaps because we can't quite forget the hate mail and the chilling silences to which Aaron was subjected when he went past Ruth, or overlook the evidence that baseball, to this day, remains feebly integrated at the managerial and front-office levels. At the Atlanta party, Commissioner Selig asked Aaron to accept baseball's official apology for past injustices, which Hank did with his usual calm. Now, as a reminder, we might try to memorize one more baseball statistic—nine, which is the number of Baseball Writers Association of America voters who left Aaron's name off their ballot altogether when he was voted into the Hall of Fame in 1982.

For all its celebrations, this has been a sad baseball year. Joe DiMaggio died; Joe Torre was found to be suffering from prostate cancer (he is making an uneventful recovery from surgery, and will be back at his job when he is strong enough for its long days and nights); and Andres Galarraga, the affectionately regarded Braves first baseman, fell victim to lymphatic cancer and took an indefinite leave. (He was startled one day in March when the full Braves squad turned up, unannounced, at his home, in West Palm Beach, to wish him well.) Elsewhere, the Cubs' Rookie of the Year pitcher, Kerry Wood, who struck out twenty batters in a single game last summer, required ligament surgery on a damaged elbow (the so-called Tommy John procedure) before the season began; he will be out for a year. Paul Wilson, an imposing Mets right-hander who has struggled to fulfill his immense promise after an arthroscopic shoulder operation three years ago, was sent back to the surgeons, this time for a torn elbow ligament.

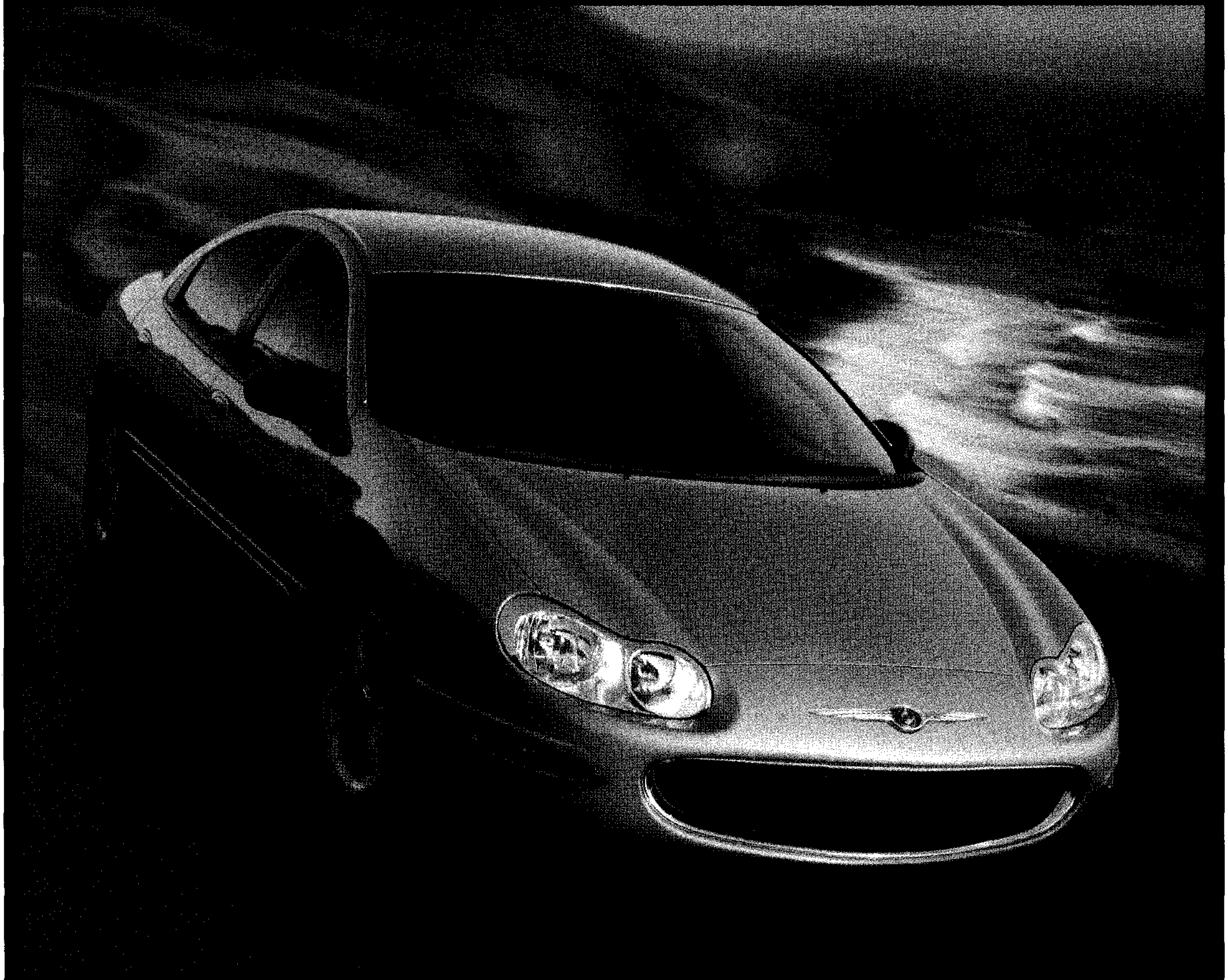
The Darryl Strawberry story is also familiar, but I was startled by a number of friends who appeared more angered than saddened by his latest difficulties. (His fellow-Yankees, in any case, still miss him; Chili Davis, when he was asked the other day for his position on Strawberry, said, "My position is easy. I want him back.") Strawberry has been placed on "administrative leave" by Major League Baseball after being charged last month with cocaine possession and solicitation of a prostitute, in Tampa. I had seen him there earlier, halfway through spring training, when he was trying to build up strength after his operation last October for colon cancer. He was in uniform on a minor-league Yankees contract, but he looked wan and distracted—and so exhausted after some morning stretching exercises that he had to find a bench in a mini-dugout, out of the sun, to catch his breath. He also had a damaged knee and was still undergoing chemotherapy—not the best of circumstances for a thirty-seven-year-old faded star dealing with alcohol and drug addiction and trying to make it back onto the champions' roster. As it happened, I was still there when Straw rolled out two little singles up the middle in an exhibition game against the Tigers—a last chance for me to catch those wandlike swings, I imagine, and that sprightly expression of his while up at bat, when he always appeared to be looking *down* at the pitcher. When the club came north, he was left behind to work out at Legends Field, but now such premises have been closed to him.

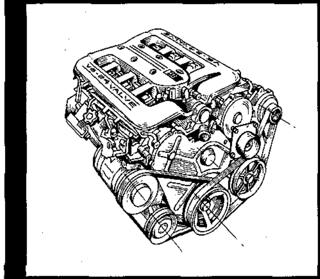
What I didn't catch in Tampa was George Steinbrenner's heartening blowup over Hideki Irabu's clueless ways afield (and a-mind) in the pitcher's late-spring appearances—heartening to traditionalists like me, I mean, who had almost begun to believe in the "new" sweetie-pie George. His characterization of Irabu as a "fat pussy toad" gave rise to a phonics conference at my house after I read it out to my wife from the *Times*, since we couldn't decide whether to give the middle word the infectious or the feline pronunciation. Only the *Post* found a way around this style-desk crisis, in Joel Sherman's column, which



"And every time I start to get the least bit serious about a Republican he turns out to be a Log Cabin Republican."

Sometimes you forget the milk.
Sometimes you forget the bread.
Sometimes you forget the store altogether.





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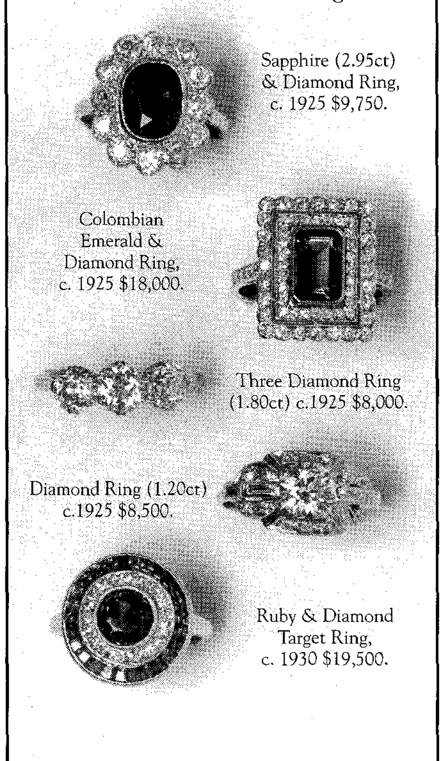
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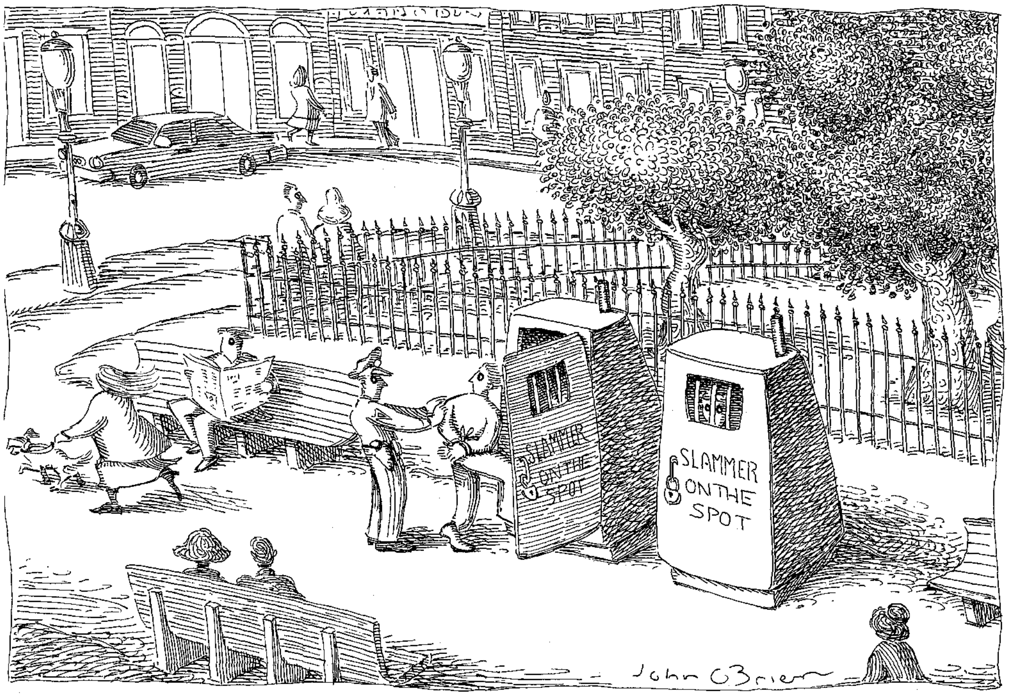
threw in a helpful "rhymes with fussy" in a parenthesis. Another baseball first.

IN this young season, the Yankees (who are being managed by their bench coach, the enjoyable Don Zimmer, in Torre's absence) have been doing us a favor by playing unevenly but winning as before. They are sub-Olympian—with a baserunning gaffe here, a botched rundown there, and, just lately, a rush of errors and bullpen failures—which adds a lively little buzz to the Stadium-crowd noises, in place of last year's incessant oohs and roars. Knoblauch gets expunged trying to steal third base with nobody out (*Hello*? Chuck?), and catcher Jorge Posada suddenly can't keep hold of Mariano Rivera's high hard one (two passed balls in an inning—*twice*?). This stuff is inspiriting, and allows one to appreciate the visiting team before it goes down once again, as expected. A youthful and talented Toronto Blue Jay team, riding an eight-game winning streak, came in over the last weekend in April, showed us some speed and pitching, kept scoring when behind, and lost all three games con brio. Its staff includes three suavely confident pitchers—Roy Halladay, Kelvim Escobar, and Chris Carpenter—who are all under twenty-five, but it was David Wells, the dishevelled erstwhile Bronx hero, who locked up with Orlando Hernandez in a 1–1 thriller on Friday, before getting knocked out in the seventh. The Boomer took his leave to prolonged cheering and applause, and managed a little wave to his old gang in the right-field bleachers. Anyone watching who didn't think "closure" here gets ten style points.

The next day's doings went to 4–4 in the eighth, with the brisk action—tagouts and bunts and rundowns—seeming to center around home plate. I had just written "No homers!" into my notes when designated hitter Chili Davis, batting left-handed, banged a three-run shot into the left-field grandstand. The engaging Chili, who is thirty-nine ("It's been my last year for the past five years," he says), has been having an exuberant spring, and fans have taken to brandishing red chili-pepper cutouts whenever he steps into the on-deck circle. A switch-hitter, he had come into this game with six hits in fifteen at-bats right-handed, and fourteen for thirty-five from the other side: .400 any way you slice it.

Upbeat news bulletins of this sort could also be compiled by fans who have lately been following the Cardinals, the White Sox, and the Mets, but they would not convey the deeper tidal flow of the season, which has already carried each of last year's American League divisional winners—the Yankees, the Cleveland Indians, and the Texas Rangers—back to the top, where they will in all likelihood remain until the playoffs in October. Over in the National League, the Atlanta Braves are perched on top of the East, as usual. Only the collapse of the heavily salaried but god-awful Orioles, whose 9–17 record in the standings is the worst in the A.L., might keep us from noticing the inexorable settling of some small-market clubs—the Twins, Royals, Expos, Pirates, et al.—toward the depths.

At this hopeful time of year, we should perhaps put off further discussion of the ironbound or dollar-bound competitive imbalance of contemporary ball, except to note that money now entirely controls the free-agent market, the amateur draft (thanks to signing bonuses), the international-talent market (how else did Hideki Irabu and Orlando Hernandez wind up with the Yankees?), and the great majority of trades. Indeed, one of the few competitive attractions this summer may be to watch what happens to the Dodgers, habitual non-winners in the National League West, who have raised their payroll to seventy-nine million dollars, the most in their league, since their acquisition by Rupert Murdoch last March. Their signing of the pallid, hard-throwing Kevin Brown, last seen with the Padres, who was the No. 1 free agent on the market last winter, showed the lordly manner as well as the depth of their ambitions. Counting bonuses and incentives, Brown will receive a hundred and five million dollars for a seven-year contract (he'll be forty in its last season), plus twelve free private-jet flights each summer for his family, to L.A. from their Georgia home. Based on his performance last year, Brown's stipend breaks down to fifty-eight thousand dollars for each strikeout and four hundred and seventeen thousand dollars for each game. Like other fans, perhaps, I try resolutely not to think in these terms once the season starts—the players themselves never do—but the numbers explain why the Yankees, whose average



salary of over three million dollars is the biggest in baseball, will win almost all those close games with the young Blue Jays or Twins, no matter how gallant we find them.

It is this form of denial, coupled with the instability and anonymity of home-team lineups from year to year and the proliferation of divisions and franchises, that tells us fans how our need for records and monuments could have begun to replace our old joy in the games and our eagerness for action. Don't wait till next year—what good will that do?—but keep watching a little, because something new or never before seen could happen here, and we'll be part of it. This is duller than our old passion, but it hurts less and doesn't require as much attention. Wait long enough and Mark McGwire will hit one out or sign your wristband.

I didn't catch any of the recent Joe DiMaggio ceremonials—the memorial service at St. Patrick's arranged by his lawyer and his foot doctor; the invitation-only brunch at Le Cirque; the West Side Highway renaming rites; the stone-unveiling in Monument Park, at the Stadium—but I grew up watching Joe play and perhaps didn't require so many remindings. I did notice, though, that the local telecasters, along with the *Times* columnist Harvey Araton, have begun to think about future uniform-number retirements by the Yanks, who have sequestered fifteen to date. DiMaggio's No. 5 is long gone, of course, though all the Yanks are wearing a smaller version of it on their sleeves this year. The next to be taken out of circulation, the speculation has it, might be Joe Torre's No. 6, and after that someday—well, how about Derek Jeter's No. 2? Derek, whose vibrant ways at shortstop and up at bat these days fill my mind's eye the way Joe D.'s once did, won't be twenty-five until next month, but pre-enshrinement has begun.

BASEBALL is changing at warp speed. Five new ballparks will be opened within the next year, starting on July 15th, with the Mariners' move into Safeco Field, which will feature a retractable roof over open-sided stands. Like the other new ball yards, in San Francisco, Houston, Detroit, and Milwaukee (never mind their clunky new corporate names), it is midsized and designed for baseball only. Taken together, these five parks will provide three hundred and fifty-seven luxury suites for their target audience—the corporate or affluent fans and their geared-up kids. For taxpayers, the happiest view will be from a seat in the Giants' Pacific Bell Park, which borders closely on the bay and floats on private debt. What with the weepy commemorative closings of the old parks and the Opening Day ribbon-cuttings and first-pitch photo ops at the new ones, we can expect a millennial flood of P.R. in the coming months to distract us from the games themselves. The ceremony I'm waiting for is a dream concocted by the Mariners' communications director, Dave Aust, who wants to sell or raffle off a thousand detonators to Mariners fans and allow them, on signal, to implode the hated old Seattle Kingdome, execution style, in one grand *ka-boom.* Alas, it probably won't happen.

My own collection of ballpark memories began when the wreckers demolished the Polo Grounds, in 1964—a mixed-up sort of tragedy, since my Giants, who inhabited the joint, had flown away to San Francisco seven years before. My later travels as a baseball writer have blunted these tender loyalties, but the imminent taking down of Tiger Stadium, in Detroit, and County Stadium, in Milwaukee, is more of a loss than I would have expected. I have spent more time and emotion in Fenway Park (which will disappear, inexorably, within the next three or four years) than at these more distant arenas, but what accrues around these old city parks is an intimacy of memory that even a casual visitor takes home with him, all unawares.

I've noticed that I still envision the Tiger Stadium stands and walls painted a summery, canoe-green shade, which was actually done over in blue during a refurbishing back in 1980. (The park itself, once called Briggs Stadium and, before that, Navin Field, has been in place on the corner of Michigan and Trumbull Avenues since 1912, and the earliest photographs are all black-and-white.) I think my little mistake is attributable to the boxy, delightful contiguity of the park itself, with its wraparound double deck of stands, its pavilion-like roofs, low walls, steep aisles, view-impeding beams, and forward-leaning, stuffed-together fans, all of which preserve and redouble sights and sounds, pressing them upon our senses. My quick recollections of past Tiger players may be skewed as well, but what swiftly comes back is the pale, unsmiling Al Kaline gathering himself for a fly ball in right field—getting his feet right and then taking the ball and getting rid of it in a fluid, textbook motion. There follows a movielike whir of other brilliant or eccentric or simply inexplicable Tigers, in those classy white uniforms, with that black Old English "D" over the heart, throwing or batting or running in their separate fashions: Kirk Gibson, Dick McAuliffe, John Wockenfuss (who stood up at the plate as if balanced on a high wire), Alan Trammell, Hank Greenberg (I *think:* big shoulders). No Ty Cobb. Famous Tiger Stadium games and plays are also in view: the fifth game of the 1968 World Series, say, when the Cardinals' Lou Brock, blocked at the plate, became an out instead of a run, and the whole event turned on its heel and went the other way; and a silencing pitchers' standoff between the Tigers' Jack Morris and the Blue Jays' Mike Flanagan at the tail end of the 1987 season that you wanted never to end.

Equally clear, though, are the ridiculously narrow, overpopulated Tiger Stadium dugouts ("In September, they looked like *lifeboats* down there," a beat-writer friend of mine reminded me the other day); the famously delicious ice cream once served in the press lounge (the recent demise of the doubleheader has probably preserved a record of eighteen helpings spooned in by Tom Dowd, travelling secretary of the Boston Red Sox, over the course of a long-ago Sunday twin bill); and the disbelieving happiness on the face of my press-box seatmate during that '68 Series, who turned out to be the sports correspondent for the State Penitentiary weekly, in Lansing (which explained his silent companion, just beyond: a guard). Is it youthful memory (but I wasn't all that young) that keeps hold of these inconsequential fragments, or is it the thrilling concentration of mind and appetite that the old, unhyped sport once made so easy for us? What baseball offers, what it does best, is to bring about moments that, because of their particularity—bottom of the eighth, two outs, three-and-one on the batter, and so on—appear to approximate the random and electric surprises of life itself, but perhaps only in these creaky, evanescing green theatres could the two, however glancingly, have seemed like one.

COUNTY STADIUM was home to the commanding Lew Burdette–Joe Adcock–Hank Aaron Braves of the late nineteen-fifties, but I recall it best as it was in the 1982 World Series, when the Cardinals defeated the Milwaukee Brewers, in seven high-scoring, back-and-forth games. Some of the rackety details are gone, but what has stayed on, untouched, is the perfect rapport between the Brewers players and the Brewers fans which one saw at County Stadium that October. It was blue-collar all the way, with no apparent difference between the pre-game beery kielbasa-cookout multitudes in the broad parking lot and the whiskery, hard-shell Brewers sitting at the clubhouse gin games inside: Pete Vuckovich, Ted Simmons, Don Money, Rollie Fingers. Visiting writers would try to get there early in order to watch center fielder Gorman Thomas, six feet two of pure grunge, pull on his game stockings—the same lucky pair he had worn every day since July. Robin Yount (he will go into the Hall of Fame this summer), who wheeled into County Stadium each day aboard his Yamaha, didn't play cards, as I recall, but you could say that he belonged: he had batted .331 that summer, with two hundred and ten hits, and won the American League M.V.P. If you somehow missed the postgame summary from the manager, Harvey Kuenn, in his office (there were no interview rooms then), you could catch up with him the next day at Cesar's Inn, a West Milwaukee tavern that he and his wife owned and operated. They lived in an apartment out in back, with their two dogs, and before game time on some days Harvey would stand in the open Dutch door between the bar and the Kuenns' living room and talk a little baseball with the latest bunch of Brewer-fan customers, who were just in after the shift change at Allis-Chalmers.

THESE afternoons will not come back, but, oddly, it was Roger Clemens who unexpectedly closed a distance for me when he and I and David Cone were talking one day last March, in Tampa. Serious and imposing-looking, as always, Clemens was sitting on the dugout step, with his cap tilted off to one side against the fierce morning sun, and when I asked him which batter had given him the most trouble he said Robin Yount. Moments like this still bring me up short, reminding me, as they do, that, no matter what else has been happening to the sport, baseball's time line scarcely exists at all for the players, and that six degrees of separation take you to Christy Mathewson.

In his first year up with the Red Sox, Clemens said—in 1984, that is—he was due to face the Brewers at County Stadium, and on consulting wise Bosox pitching heads like Bruce Hurst and Bobby Ojeda about the best way to pitch to Yount he was told "away and away": pitch him outside and expect him to take the ball toward right field. "It was one of those Wednesday-afternoon specials out there, about fifty thousand in the stands," Roger went on. "I threw him one as hard as I could—I think my hat turned a little bit—and it went about a ball away, off the plate. I heard it go by my head—it sounded like *bacon* goin' by—and it wound up about three rows up, in dead center. The place went crazy. Next time he came up, I threw him another, I think even harder, and he took it to dead center again—a solo shot. I was screaming and hollering at myself."

Clemens had lightened up—ballplayers always seem cheerful when they talk about things going wrong in a game. After the game, he said, Hurst and Ojeda had followed him up the odd back stairway at County Stadium, which leads into the clubhouse, to tell him that, yes, Yount was that good—maybe the No. 1 hitter just now—and that the scouting report on him looked a little out of date.

"That night," Roger went on, "I got a call from my mother, back home, saying, 'He *owns* you.' I listened, because if my mom is noticing, at the age of sixty, there must be something to it." ♦

> Augustine, who is judge and jury, must decide whether to dismiss the four charges or prolong the trial, at the heart of Malaysia's political turbulence, by ordering Anwar to mount a daffiness.
>
> —*Jakarta* (*Indonesia*) *Post.*

The defendant's plea of not giddy notwithstanding.

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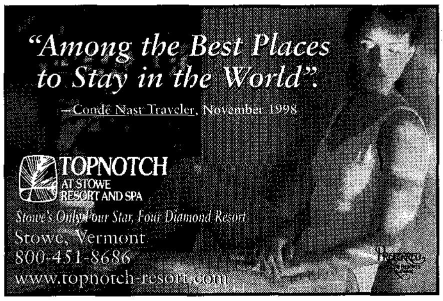

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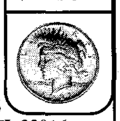

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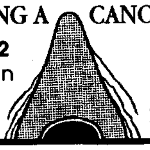

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TALKING POINTS

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BY STEVE MARTIN

Be brief!

Don't open with a joke. There will be killjoys in the crowd.

Get their attention . . . make them add?

Eighty-seven too uninteresting a number:
Seven dozen and three years ago?
Eight nines and fifteen years ago?
One sesquicentennial minus sixty-three years ago?
LXXXVII?

On "all men are created equal," consider "all persons are equal people," or "all guys and gals are goers." (Alliteration too much for a battlefield dedication?)

Remember, the audience is moronic. Even though we're standing on a battlefield, mention the Civil War.

"Dedicate," "consecrate," "hallow": use one but not all three!!!

Throw in a parrot joke?

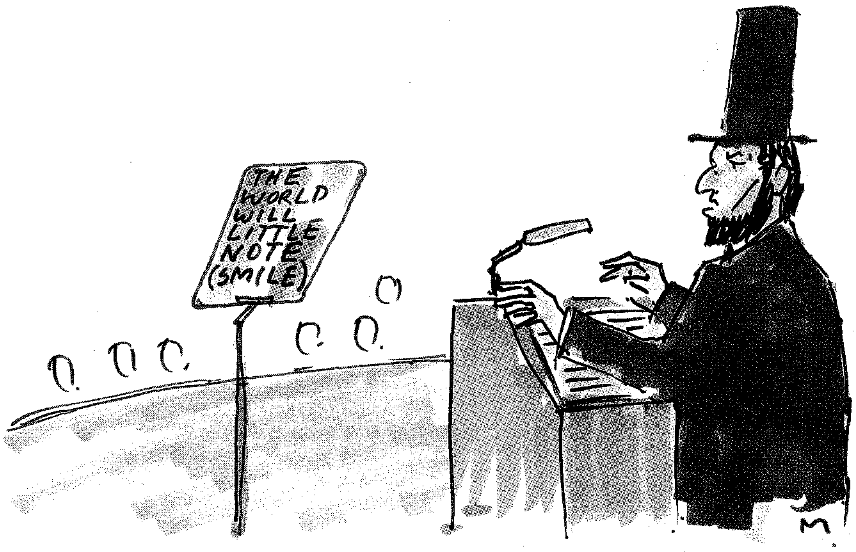
Good idea to mention that no one will remember this speech. It will make them remember it.

Middle section: Don't lose them here . . . make big gestures. Perhaps vocalize cannon-fire sounds?

Idea for gag: mid-speech, take drink of water, say, "That's a tall drink o' water, and so am I!" Or, take off stovepipe hat, turn upside down, let chicken feather fall to ground, say nothing, put hat back on.

Can we say ". . . under God"?

If speech feels too long, cut ". . . you know, as I look into your faces, and some of these faces need looking into, I'm thinking that this nation, indivisible, united as a kangaroo and her joey, shall never swaver (Is this a word? Look up), shall never coagulate into a hard gel of indifference. That on this battlefield today, right after I'm done speaking, I'm hosting cocktails and wieners, and hope for a really good three-legged race."


THE WORLD WILL LITTLE NOTE (SMILE)

MICHAEL CRAWFORD

Ending:
Of, by, for?
By, for, of?
For, by, of?
Of, for, by?
For, of, by?
By, of, for?
For, for, for? (Doesn't work.)

Bow, remove hat. (Make running gag of chicken feather? If so, would have to load second feather during initial chicken-feather bit.)

. . . shall not perish from the parish. (Love this! Too hip for the room?)

Don't forget to smile! ♦

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BALKAN JOURNAL

EDITOR IN EXILE

Can a radical newspaper become the blueprint for an independent Kosovo?

BY ELIZABETH RUBIN

On the afternoon of Wednesday, March 24th, Baton Haxhiu, the editor of the Albanian-language newspaper *Koha Ditore*, put the paper to bed early, with a banner headline that read "WE ARE WAITING FOR NATO'S BOMBS." Then he told his staff to go home. If NATO did strike Yugoslavia that night, the Serb paramilitary forces patrolling the streets of Pristina, Kosovo's capital, were likely to intensify their violent attacks against ethnic Albanians, and *Koha Ditore* (*Daily Times*) was an obvious target.

The newspaper had been founded in April of 1997, and its irreverent and activist coverage of the province's political life had at one time or another irritated all the major players in Kosovo: the pacifist Kosovar Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova; the Kosovo Liberation Army; the American Ambassador to Macedonia, Christopher Hill; and, of course, President Slobodan Milosevic. In rowdy tabloid style, *Koha's* editors had used gory photographs, dramatic headlines, and even pranks to make themselves heard. They had criticized Rugova's political naïveté and Hill's initial failure to negotiate with anyone outside Rugova's circle. They had repeatedly denounced Milosevic's brutal regime. And although they had contributed to an early wave of popular support for the K.L.A. by mythologizing it in print, they were often distressed by the guerrillas' ill-conceived tactics and had on numerous occasions angered them by drawing attention to their activities.

Milosevic had accused the newspaper of being an organ of Western propaganda, and his agents had sought many times to disrupt its operations by beating up its founding editor, Veton Surroi, and several young journalists, forcing others into hiding, and interrogating Baton Haxhiu. On March 22nd, a Serbian court had ordered *Koha Ditore* to pay a forty-one-thousand-dollar fine for inciting racial and national hatred by publishing a statement from the K.L.A. leader Hashim Thaci that accused the Serb state of genocide. But the paper's militancy had won it immense popularity with its Kosovar Albanian readers, and Haxhiu, its outspoken and combative thirty-three-year-old editor, was referred to, even by those who had never met him, as Baton.

Now, as NATO prepared for the bombing, the members of *Koha Ditore's* staff said goodbye to each other and "See you in free Kosovo," and scattered through the city. Baton spent that night at the home of a friend, listening to the rumbling detonations of NATO's bombs. "It was the first time I was happy to hear bombing," he told me later. In the morning, he drove his car, a red Volkswagen Golf, to the *Koha* office, but he found Serbian militiamen guarding the door. "Last night, your office was destroyed and your security guard was killed," one of the men told him. Three armed Serbs then got into his car and made him drive around Pristina for twenty-five minutes. The streets were empty except for the Serb patrols, and his passengers kept waving their Kalashnikovs around. "I thought for sure they planned to kill me," Baton said. But, after shaking him down for three hundred Deutsche marks, the gunmen had him drop them off at a police station.

Baton drove to a nearby Albanian neighborhood, where two of his youngest reporters—Garentina Kraja and Nebi Qena, known as Tina and Beni—were staying, with Qena's family. The three journalists listened to a radio broadcast of a NATO briefing in Brussels and heard that *Koha Ditore's* lawyer, Bajram Kelmendi, a human-rights advocate who was widely revered in Kosovo, and his two sons had been executed by the

Serbs. According to other reports, Serb assassins were hunting down prominent ethnic Albanians and their families in the towns and villages outside Pristina and within the capital itself. "I thought, Now all of us can be killed—especially me, after two years of openly accusing Milosevic," Baton recalled.

All afternoon, Baton and his colleagues watched from the balcony as armed Serbs, many of them teen-agers, smashed and looted Albanian shops and set fire to buildings. "We were in denial," Beni told me later. "I saw people fleeing with nothing but bags in their hands and I felt sorry for them, but it still wasn't happening to me personally." The *Koha* journalists imagined that they might be rescued, and Baton even called the paper's Brussels correspondent to ask whether the British Special Air Services had a plan to evacuate intellectuals. The answer was no.

On Saturday, Baton moved again. Dodging militias, he drove down a side street and spotted an old acquaintance, Teki Dervishi, a writer in his mid-fifties, who had spent years as a political prisoner of the former Yugoslav President Josip Tito. Dervishi agreed to shelter him. For the next two days, the men ate only apples and tea as they watched a barrage of propaganda on Serbian state TV, and Dervishi passed the time imagining the horrors that Milosevic's men had in store for Baton. "The first Serb will fuck you," Dervishi said. "The second will beat you, and the third will kill you." All day, he sat wrapped in a blanket, smoking and moaning, and telling Baton what he didn't want to hear: the West didn't care about Muslims or Albanians; airstrikes were useless, and ground troops a fantasy; and they would all be deported, if they lived long enough.

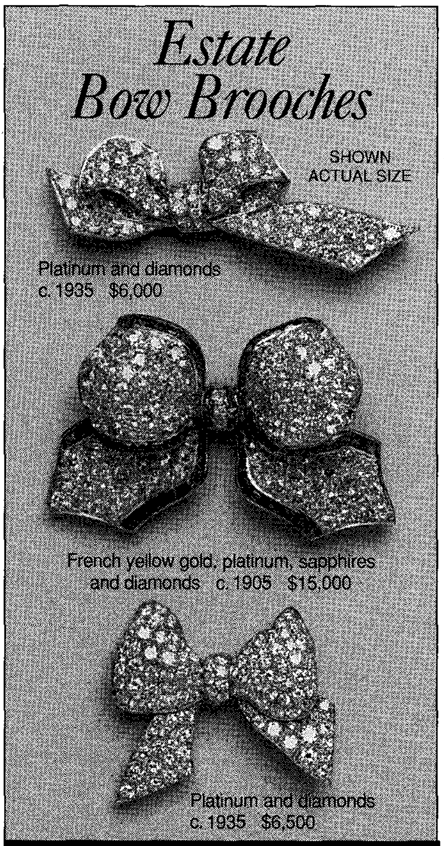
On Monday, Dervishi's frightened neighbors knocked on his door, looking for company. They had satellite television, and that afternoon Baton watched a NATO press briefing in Brussels, at which a military spokesman reported the execution of five prominent Kosovars, including Baton Haxhiu. Baton watched his *Koha Ditore* correspondents crying for him at a press conference, and he listened to the eulogies of foreign journalists. He was stunned and afraid to come forward. "I said, 'NATO will lose credibility, and all newsmen will seem like liars. I am sorry for my family, but politics must go on,' " he told me later. Dervishi and his neighbors had a different attitude. They were uncomfortable having such an important "dead" man in their midst.

The next morning, Baton shaved off the red beard and mustache that had covered his jowly face for twelve years, put on a cap and glasses, and left. After he knocked on several doors, a family let him into their basement, and he stayed there, without news or contact, for three days. On the fourth day, Serbian forces moved into the neighborhood, expelling Albanians en masse. When Baton spotted a young woman with a baby passing his basement window, he rushed out of hiding to walk beside her, saying, "From now on, you are my wife and this is my child." The woman recognized him and agreed. With his new "family," he joined the column of deportees and followed what seemed to be his entire city, moving in cars and on foot toward the Macedonian border.

I met Baton a few days later, aboard the daily flight from Zurich to Skopje. I'd seen him at the Zurich airport, telling his story to journalists, and he seemed eager to keep on telling it. His beard was growing back, and he was still wearing

Staff members of Koha Ditore: Garentina Kraja, Nebi Qena, Shkumbin Mustafa, and Baton Haxhiu. Photograph by Alex Majoli.

MAGNUM



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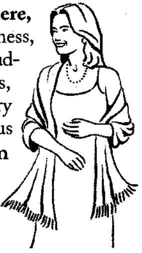

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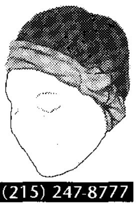

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the clothes he'd had on near the Macedonian border, where officials had plucked him from the masses and flown him to Western Europe to meet with government ministers and the press. In Bonn and in London, he and several of his friends were fêted as heroes of the Kosovar resistance, but as they sat in bars or hotel rooms and watched news footage of the systematic deportation of Kosovo's Albanian population, they were overwhelmed by the powerlessness of their people. Since the NATO airstrikes had begun, two weeks earlier, almost half a million Kosovar Albanians had been expelled from their country. Baton told me that he was now on his way back to Macedonia, determined to resurrect his newspaper there, with funds pledged by the British government.

As the leading voice for the cultural and political liberation of Kosovo's Albanians, *Koha Ditore* carried the burden of a great deal of anguished history. The lines of division between Serbs and Albanians were clearly drawn by the Balkan War of 1912. By the end of that war, some twenty-five thousand ethnic Albanians were estimated to have been slaughtered by Serb and Montenegrin soldiers, in what Leon Trotsky, who covered the war, called a "national endeavor to correct data in the ethnographical statistics that [were] not favorable to them."

Kosovar Albanians often refer to 1912 as the source of their current predicament. In the years that followed, the Kosovars rebelled several times, but repression followed swiftly, and the Serbs continued to devise plans to rid the land of Albanians. The balance shifted for a time during the occupation of Yugoslavia in the Second World War. The Italians and Germans made Albanian an official language and opened Albanian schools. In these years of "national awakening," the Albanians collaborated with the Fascists to attack Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo, killing thousands.

After the war, Tito's security service dealt harshly with Kosovar Albanians suspected of being supporters of Albania's dictator, Enver Hoxha. But in 1974 Tito expanded Kosovo's autonomy, ushering in an Albanian cultural and institutional renaissance that many Kosovars consider their proudest era. It was shortlived. Kosovo's autonomy was the first casualty of Milosevic's nationalist campaign, and in 1989 he reasserted Serb control: Albanian institutions and news media were shut down; tens of thousands of Albanians were fired from their jobs; a Serbian curriculum was imposed in schools; Albanians were denied entry to Pristina University; and the Serbs, who made up about ten per cent of the province's population, took control of the police, the courts, and the government.

The Albanians responded by starting a popular movement called the Democratic League of Kosovo, or L.D.K., which is often compared with Poland's Solidarity. In 1992, in a clandestine election, Ibrahim Rugova, a pacifist poet, was elected President of the new "Republic of Kosovo." Rugova sought international recognition for his state, but it was a purely rhetorical move. Arguing that an uprising would give the Serbs an excuse to wipe out Albanians, he chose instead the Gandhian model of peaceful resistance, boycotting Serb rule and establishing a parallel Albanian state system, financed by a three-per-cent tax collected from Albanian émigrés around the world. Rugova's peaceful "shadow government" suited Milosevic, because it posed no threat to Belgrade's control. It suited the containment policy of the West, which was overwhelmed and paralyzed by indecision about how to deal with Yugoslavia's wars. And it suited Kosovo's Albanians, who watched Serb forces destroy Bosnia and were reassured by Rugova's claim that Clinton and the West supported his goals.

Few questioned Rugova's assertion that he was leading the province toward independence. But in 1993 Baton Haxhiu, who was working as a reporter for *Koha*—an Albanian weekly founded by Veton Surroi, which was modelled on *Time*—started interviewing Western diplomats and heard a different story. "They said to me, 'We do not support Kosovo's independence, and we never will. It would be dangerous for the region,'" Baton recalled. "They said, 'We just support the peace of Mr. Rugova.'" Baton had little patience for diplomatic discourse, and he was incensed by the "political dualism" of Rugova and the West. "Outside Pristina, people were frustrated and poor, and under pressure from Serbian police, who were free to go into any house and rob and beat people," he told me. "Every family and village believed in this illusion that independence would come; every house had pictures of Mr. Rugova. It drove me crazy. He was like the Pope."

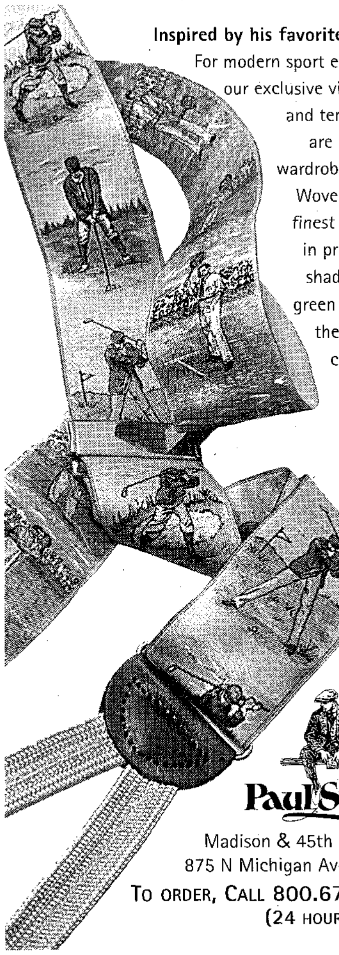
Haxhiu and Surroi began to publish articles with headlines such as "KOSOVO'S INDEPENDENCE IS THIRTY-FOUR SQUARE METRES"—an allusion to the size of the Writers' Building, where Rugova lived. People spat at Haxhiu on the street and called him a traitor. In the course of six months, *Koha's* circulation plummeted from twenty-five thousand copies to fewer than four thousand. Instead of giving up, Haxhiu and Surroi decided to expand their campaign by transforming the magazine—whose readership consisted almost entirely of like-minded intellectuals—into a popular daily newspaper. They succeeded. *Koha* may have begun as "a rag of the K.L.A.," as one Westerner put it, but "it grew up over time." By its last printing in Pristina—its six-hundred-and-sixty-sixth issue—the paper's circulation had reached more than fifty thousand, in Kosovo and abroad.

Shortly after the air war began, Rugova appeared—reportedly under duress—with Milosevic at a televised Serb-run press conference. Portrayed as Milosevic's helpless stooge, he was discredited in the eyes of the Kosovar Albanians. The next day, the K.L.A., from its headquarters, in Tirana, Albania, proclaimed itself the new Kosovar government-in-exile. But, even with the K.L.A. recruiting and arming at a frantic rate, no one was able to halt the deportations, and the Kosovars now saw themselves as obstacles in the West's drive for some new world order. "We have an absurd situation now," Baton told me. "The world is speaking for the Albanians, not Albanians themselves." He tried to draw some hope from the attention that had been showered on him in Western Europe. He believed that if *Koha Ditore* could resume publication it could persuade its readers not to lose faith in NATO as their ally in the struggle for Kosovo's liberation.

Publishing *Koha Ditore* was as much a way of keeping Baton and his staff sane as it was a potential vehicle for his political ambitions. "No, no, no," he'd say. "Veton Surroi is the politician. I am too, too"—he'd wave his hands, trying to find the words—"impatient and emotional." Yet every press conference he held to articulate his belief that Kosovo had to become a NATO protectorate suggested otherwise. When I asked Westerners and Albanians about Baton, they told me, "He's smart, he's politically shrewd," and then, "He's a lunatic and a self-promoter." Or, "He's brave and doesn't fear putting his neck on the table," and then, "He's stupidly, naïvely brave." Diplomats and journalists sought out Baton not least because he held nothing back.

A FEW days after the flight, I caught up with Baton in Tetovo, Macedonia, a small, predominantly ethnic-Albanian town, set in the foothills of the snow-covered Sar mountain range, which forms Macedonia's border with Kosovo. The town has an old Turkish bath, bazaars, red-tiled roofs, cafés blaring pop music, and ugly Socialist-era cement-block buildings. Much of Pristina's cultural élite was now living there. As many as fifty thousand Kosovars were out of the camps and were staying with friends, relatives, or strangers in the town and nearby villages—sometimes as many as eighty in a single house. The Macedonian Slavs in Tetovo were on edge, fearful that the traumatized and radicalized Kosovar refugees would stay, and would swing Macedonia's ethnic balance in their favor, stirring up the old separatist urges of western Macedonia's Albanians and destabilizing the already fragile state.

In Tetovo, the Macedonians frequented their cafés, and the Albanians frequented theirs. Café Arbi, at the center of town, had become the hub for Pristina's exiled intellectuals, and there had been several knife fights between Albanians and Macedonians in the surrounding alleyways. Arbi was a good place from which to follow the war. At night, NATO's planes could be heard, and on occasion so could the detonations



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behind the mountains. New deportees would appear, pale and high-strung, and circulate among the tables in a ritual of embraces and questions about who was still in Kosovo, who had got out, who had been killed.

Baton could usually be found amid the tumult at the café, using one of its tables as his temporary office. The story of his death and resurrection had transformed him from a newspaper editor in Yugoslavia's poorest province to an international celebrity from the battleground on which the West had staked its honor and its conception of a new world order. When Baton called his wife and son, who were in hiding in Kosovo, to tell them that he was alive, his wife asked him not to talk to the press. "We're still inside," she said. "Think about us, not just Kosovo." But Baton could think only of Kosovo and *Koha Ditore*, and the telephone at Arbi rang with calls from radio stations in Korea, Japan, England, America, and elsewhere in Europe. Tables were filled with television crews; print and radio reporters patiently waited to interview him. Baton accommodated them all. He was hooked up by satellite to hold a joint press conference with the British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, and he travelled to Skopje to meet with the French Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin. When he heard that his story was on the front page of ninety-five newspapers around the world, he told me, "This is absurd. I am just a journalist from the Balkans. Do they have nothing else to write about?" But he clearly liked it and was determined to exploit it.

If Kosovo were ever liberated, it would need a new political infrastructure, and to Baton this meant defining an alternative to the military force of the K.L.A. *Koha Ditore* had heavily promoted the Rambouillet peace accords, and Baton was still angry with the K.L.A. for its three-week delay in signing the agreement. In that time, he said, the Serbs had moved more than twenty thousand additional troops into Kosovo and along the border. They had stockpiled tanks and hard artillery and prepared their people for war. Ambivalence about the K.L.A. was widespread among the Pristina intellectuals in Tetovo; they respected the guerrillas as fighters but also regarded them as hard-liners and political dilettantes, whose poor tactics had left the civilians they were trying to liberate to suffer the Serbs' brutality. To be sure, Baton told me, NATO now needed the K.L.A. "to do the dirty work in Kosovo." But he added, "We must have NATO ground troops. Otherwise, the K.L.A. will think it has won and will eliminate any opposition. They are idealists, and they want a regime with arms. I don't want political commissars—there would be no life for me in such a Kosovo." Such comments infuriated the K.L.A. and led Baton's critics to say that "he understands politics, but he acts before he thinks."

When I asked Baton if there was any genuine alternative to the K.L.A., he said, without any hesitation, "We have no alternative voice from Albanians now except me." It was a grandiose claim, but Baton was determined to live up to it by reviving *Koha Ditore*. So he worked the phones, rallying his dispersed staff (although many, like Surroi, were still in hiding), lobbying Western governments and private donors for funds, and trying to persuade Macedonia's Slav-dominated government that *Koha Ditore* would in fact help stabilize the country. Barely a week after he had established himself at Café Arbi, Baton announced that *Koha Ditore's* first edition-in-exile was being prepared for distribution.

CIRCLES

These are rocks he loved when he was alive
And how alive he was, like the sun this afternoon
Making mica gleam on the cold face of granite
And giving walls a long shadow across the grass
In the dead of winter, when he'd come from abroad
Like the sun emerging now from behind that cloud
To flood this dark lake water with golden light,
So that I still believe in him as in the sun,
And expect him to reappear as winter passes,
The telephone ringing some stormy night, his voice
Calmly announcing the day he's planning to cross
Back into our lives with so much news to tell
Of where he has been since he died, though I know
It's only a dream, so vivid it makes me cry
"Tony, it's you! What the hell made you play
This trick on us? Thank God you're alive and well!"
Which cannot be, though the sun breaks through
All the clouds on the lake where I cast his ashes
And a heron rose from these rocks like a ghost
In three wide circles ascending who knows where.

—Richard Murphy

One day at Café Arbi, I met Tina Kraja and Beni Qena, the two *Koha* reporters whom Baton had stayed with in Pristina. They were in their early twenties and wore fleece jackets, jeans, khakis, and sneakers. Both of them—Tina, with short chestnut hair pulled back in a headband, and Beni, whose gangly bearing was reminiscent of Jimmy Stewart—looked like American college students. They were trilingual and worldly, and their mood alternated between optimistic energy and total gloom. Unlike Baton, they had not been rescued at the border. When I met them, they had just managed to escape from the Stenkovec refugee camp. (Beni had got out by carrying a camera and a mobile phone for a TV news crew he knew.) They had arrived in Tetovo with nowhere to stay—refugees like everyone else, or, rather, as many Kosovars described themselves, "deportees." Baton wanted them to get right to work, but the story of upheaval they were trying to absorb now was their own.

Nine days after the NATO bombing

began, Tina and Beni and various members of their families had left for Macedonia. In Pristina, they had seen footage of a nightmarish swamp of mud and rain and human waste at the border between Yugoslavia and Macedonia. They'd figured that cameras always zoomed in on the worst images, but when they got off the train in Blace they realized that, if anything, the cameras had made things look better than they were. Family members were losing one another in the dark; Macedonian policemen, wearing masks and gloves, were beating back the surging Kosovars. NATO was totally unprepared. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was nowhere in evidence. Baton later called the horror at Blace "a media coup for NATO," because it won support for what the West was selling as a humanitarian war.

Tina and Beni spent days trudging from one hill to the next, waiting in line to enter Macedonia, while a few of the Macedonian police shouted, "Get down, you fuckers. You all need a bullet." "It was like 'The Twilight Zone,' " Beni said. "We thought we'd never get out. Tina kept crying and I wanted to pull her face off—I couldn't stand it. You had traumatized people, and these bastards kept calling them names." Then he corrected himself: "I mean *us*."

Tina and Beni still had trouble adjusting to being "part of the news." As Tina often told me, "We were the ones writing the news." In reality, Tina and Beni had always been part of the story they covered. They were in the first generation to come of age in Rugova's shadow world and had attended one of its first high schools, which were in houses donated by Kosovar Albanians. Both looked back at their adolescence in Rugova's system with scorn. As Beni put it, "First, we thought, Fuck the Serbs, they made us second-class citizens. Then it was, Fuck the Albanians, they didn't organize anything. The schools at home were a joke. We had no future, and we were just watching the years go by, achieving nothing."

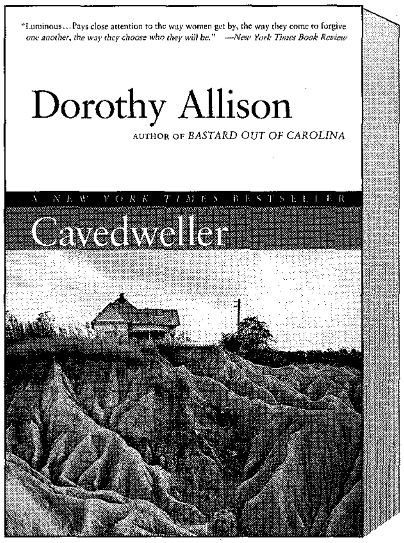
Unlike Beni, who was the son of a theatre director and an actress, Tina came from an activist family. One uncle had been imprisoned for supporting Enver Hoxha's Albania, and her father was a founding member of the L.D.K. He had gone to Albania in 1993, as a representative of the Kosovar "parallel" government, and the Serb authorities had not allowed him to return.

In 1997, Tina and Beni joined *Koha Ditore.* The paper's start-up staff was composed mostly of restless twenty-year-olds, some of whom, like Tina, were culled from a cultural group called the Post-Pessimists. Its members, in Sarajevo, Zagreb, Belgrade, and Pristina, were seen as a kind of student élite, who travelled around Europe to "ethnic tolerance" conferences. That fall marked a turning point for *Koha Ditore* and radicalized the paper's staff. Pristina's students planned a march to demand the restoration of their university, and *Koha Ditore* rallied to the cause with headlines like "MEET YOU ALL AT 6:30." Some twenty thousand people had gathered for the march, when Serb police in riot gear attacked with tear gas and clubs and started beating the marchers. Tina, who, with Beni, was among the protesters, recalled the exhilaration of those around her. "It was the first time, after years of apathy, that Albanians took to the streets and said 'No,' " she said. "That's when all the trouble began, and from then on our life was *Koha.*"

That October, Baton sent Tina and Beni to cover conditions in Kosovo's villages. In Drenica, a rugged region that has been the source of nearly every Kosovar Albanian uprising, they discovered members of the K.L.A., which was then still a secretive group primarily based abroad. They were taken into the family of a K.L.A. member called Adem Jashari, who had been convicted of terrorism in absentia, but they had to promise not to write about what they saw. In March of 1998, the Serbs attacked the Jashari family compound, killing at least fifty-one people, and triggering an unorganized uprising of new K.L.A. recruits across the province.

Koha Ditore's journalism was weakened, at times, by inexperience and fervor, but the paper nevertheless became a more essential element on the political scene than either of Kosovo's other daily papers. *Koha's* generally supportive coverage of the K.L.A. granted the movement a legitimacy that the West had denied it. Ambassador Chris Hill was infuriated by the newspaper, which, as

New York Times Bestseller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one diplomat said, was "critical of Hill's negotiating scheme—which dealt only with Rugova, leaving out the voices of other important figures in Pristina." The disagreement between Baton and Chris Hill came to a head when Baton got hold of early drafts of Hill's peace proposals and published them under headlines such as "KOSOVO IS JUST A TERRITORY" and "NOTHING HAS CHANGED." Hill would have nothing to do with *Koha*. "This was a mistake," another Western diplomat said. "Baton was progressive. Instead of cultivating people like him, the U.S. made Rugova its man, because it could manipulate him."

Those arguments seemed irrelevant now to Tina and Beni. "We all thought that omnipotent NATO would force Milosevic to sign the agreement in two days," Tina told me. "When we said, 'See you in free Kosovo,' we never thought it would be in Tetovo."

ONE afternoon, I joined Beni on a visit to Stenkovec. He wanted to take food, towels, and slippers to his cousins there. The camp is just a twenty-minute drive from Skopje and five miles from the border, and it looks like a nomadic desert city. The seemingly impassable Sar Mountains form an intimidating presence around the arid plain, now planted with rows of thousands of white and green tents. On a small hill overlooking the camp, smoke gushes from factory chimneys, blurring the skyline and creating, with the dust squalls, a permanent layer of soot that clings to clothes and hair.

For the tens of thousands of Kosovars in the camp, life is defined by lists and lines: lists of who will make it to other Western countries, lists of the massacred, of families separated and children lost, and of war crimes; lines for water and food and toilets, and lines to get on the lists for transfer elsewhere. Everyone had heard rumors of people paying bribes to local volunteers working for the aid agencies.

The camp seemed to have doubled in size since I'd first been there, ten days earlier, and a sickening sense of permanence suffused the place. Macedonians had opened shops for snacks, produce, teakettles, and camping stoves. People hadn't washed in weeks. Fights were breaking out. From an oversized Army tent we heard the out-of-tune voices of children singing a K.L.A. song, and I was reminded of the comment of an aid worker who had been in Gaza: "Nothing to do, lost their homes, nowhere to go, perfect recruiting ground for soldiers." Hovering throughout, near the bread lines, the Adidas basketball nets, the Israeli medical tents, and the mobile-phone queues, were the giant white satellite dishes transmitting the spectacle to the world.

Beni and I found his cousin Beti and her children in Tent No. 173. A box of fresh tomatoes, onions, and cucumbers, along with the refugee's essential item—a plastic jerry can for water—sat by the entrance. Beti was red-faced and exhausted. After the way she'd been treated at Blace, she said, she had no desire to live in Macedonia, and she had put her family on a list for France. When we left, Beni hugged them all, then turned away quickly and shifted his baseball cap back and forth on his head. As we walked up the hill to another encampment, I saw that he was struggling not to cry. He said that when he saw how fragile Beti was he couldn't bring himself to tell her that her brother had been killed in an artillery attack. The family had put him in a coffin to bury him, but the next day the shelling intensified, the family fled, and her brother remained behind.

On our way back to Tetovo, Beni spoke of his boyhood in a unified Yugoslavia. "I grew up as a Yugoslav. I didn't think of myself as having an Albanian homeland or ethnic identity. Now there are too many Balkan truths," he said, "Albanian, Macedonian, Serb," and after a moment, he added, "I pity the Serbs. They used to be a great nation with pride. They fought the Germans in World War I and World War II and now this guy Milosevic comes and fucks up everybody." Like virtually everyone else I met in Macedonia, he kept asking, "How come the mightiest military alliance in the history of the world cannot cream this maniac in Belgrade?" Then he said that it hardly mattered anymore. Even if NATO did destroy Milosevic, he could not imagine a future

"Obviously your cane is too long."

that would repair the damage done to the Albanians in the past few weeks.

BATON disagreed. The first edition-in-exile of *Koha Ditore* arrived at the camps on April 26th, a rainy Monday morning, with the headline "KOSOVO MUST BE THE WINNER IN THIS WAR." "People are ready to leave for the West," Baton told me. "They're frustrated, in the dark, without any information. I want the paper to tell them what can happen with Kosovo in two months and to encourage them to stay. Otherwise, we are going to have an empty Kosovo." The newspaper was written for the uprooted Kosovars, but its message—that there was an alternative to a K.L.A. state—seemed aimed equally at NATO, as a plea for ground troops and the establishment of a Western protectorate in Kosovo.

But even Baton's reporters, most of whom agreed that the only hope for a democratic Kosovo was a NATO protectorate, doubted whether the newspaper could have such an impact. Ardian Arifaj, the paper's twenty-five-year-old managing editor, told me that for him publishing *Koha Ditore* in Macedonia was not about politics but about survival—"the survival of Kosovo's Albanians as a people with their own identity." We were sitting in a television editing room as he played footage of himself and his girlfriend distributing the newspaper at Stenkovec. Men and children tugged at the bundles they carried, and stood in puddles to read over each other's shoulders. People were crowded behind a bulging fence, their hands waving and reaching, as if for their first food rations. A girl in a black-and-white checked flannel shirt wept as she turned the pages; her father and brothers were still in Kosovo, and she'd been without news of any kind for twenty days. The images made Baton's campaign to keep the refugees there seem cruel, somewhat akin to the ironic legend stencilled on the camp's tents, in large black letters, which Beni's cousin and thousands of other Kosovars had to look at all day: A GIFT FROM THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

A few days later, I returned to Tetovo to see Baton before he left for Paris—as a special guest for "Kosovo Day." He had just closed the paper's fifth edition-in-exile, in a one-room office equipped with new, state-of-the-art computers. I found him at Arbi, with Rexhep Ismajli, a prominent linguist who, as an act of resistance, had refused to leave Pristina. But he had decided to take his wife and daughters out two days earlier, when Serb police abducted a prominent family next door to him. Pristina was now a giant prison, Ismajli said. When NATO bombed, the Serbs took cover, and he and the other remaining Albanians came out, like earthworms in the rain, to say "Hello, how are you?" and then disappear again.

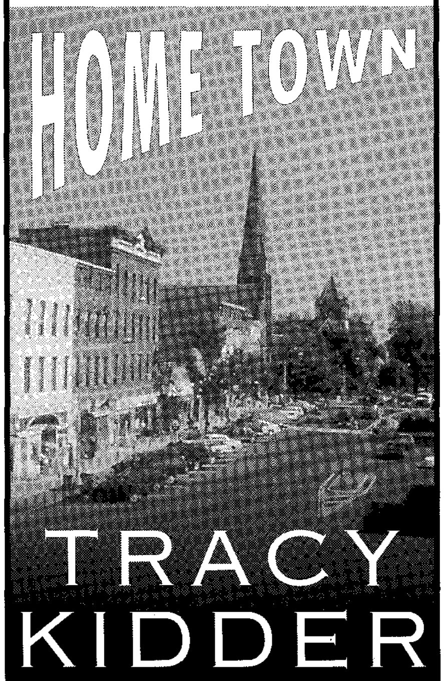
The talk at Arbi was of the thousands of Albanians who remained in Pristina. Ismajli could not understand why NATO wouldn't give the Albanians arms to protect themselves. Even if NATO ground troops did finally go in, they wouldn't reach Pristina for days, and in the meantime the Serbs would probably do what they did when they abandoned the suburbs of Sarajevo after the Dayton agreement: burn everything down—only this time there were people still there.

I thought of something that Baton had said, in an uncharacteristically dark moment, away from the TV cameras: perhaps the best the Albanians could hope for was that NATO would destroy Serbia to the point where "it became a wreck of a state like Albania." Then, he added, "all the Balkans can start from zero in the twenty-first century." ♦

THERE'LL ALWAYS BE AN ENGLAND

[*From the magazine Royalty*]

A milkman who was awarded the MBE for services to the community has shown his dedication to his customers by turning down an invitation to Buckingham Palace to receive the honour. Trevor Jones, 69, who has been delivering milk in Tredegar, South Wales, since he was six, said travelling to London would disrupt his round and the lives of the people he calls on. "Jones the Milk", as he is known, was nominated for an honour by customers to whom he is a home help, matchmaker, odd job man and friend. Every day he delivers milk to a married couple whom he introduced to one another and a blind couple to whom he reads any important mail. He has rescued a woman who became stuck in her bath and last week raised the alarm after finding an elderly customer had fallen and broken a hip. "I am a very lucky man to be out in the fresh air all day," said Mr Jones, who first delivered milk from his father's horse and cart. "It is a great honour to get the MBE. The Queen is a very nice lady but she isn't worth rushing for. I am sure she will understand," he said.



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A REPORTER AT LARGE

BIG GUNS

The lawyers who brought down the tobacco industry are taking on the gunmakers and the N.R.A. Is Littleton their chance?

BY PETER J. BOYER

TEN years ago, Dennis Henigan, an earnest, bespectacled attorney at the highly regarded Washington firm of Foley & Lardner, gave up his lucrative partnership to become a public-interest lawyer in the cause of gun control. It was an unprofitable career move but one that Henigan made eagerly, and he has no regrets. He had found himself badly miscast as a corporate litigator, not least because he had discovered himself to be unmotivated by money. But he was perfectly suited to the role of "cause" lawyer. At Oberlin College, he was passionately involved in the anti-war movement, and after graduating, in 1973, he agonized over whether to take a graduate degree in philosophy or in the law. Once in the bar, he found his only professional joy in the pro-bono work he did for many leftish causes that had excited his interest, including the Environmental Defense Fund. When he read that the Center to Prevent Handgun Violence (a sister organization of Handgun Control, Inc., the gun-control advocacy group headed by Sarah Brady) was looking for a lawyer to direct its new litigation effort, he jumped at the chance. "I knew a lot of people in the public-interest community, and finally just decided, Gosh, those people are having so much more fun than I am, so why am I only doing this part time?" he says. "And I thought, Wow! An issue where it was highly unlikely that I would ever have to do anything I didn't believe in."

In the arena of interest-group politics, Henigan proved to be the most valuable sort of partisan: the true believer. When he was growing up, in the comfortable Washington suburb of Springfield, Virginia, he had desperately wanted that most coveted prize of American boyhood—a BB gun. His father, a drama professor at George Washington University, detested guns, and firmly denied his son his wish.

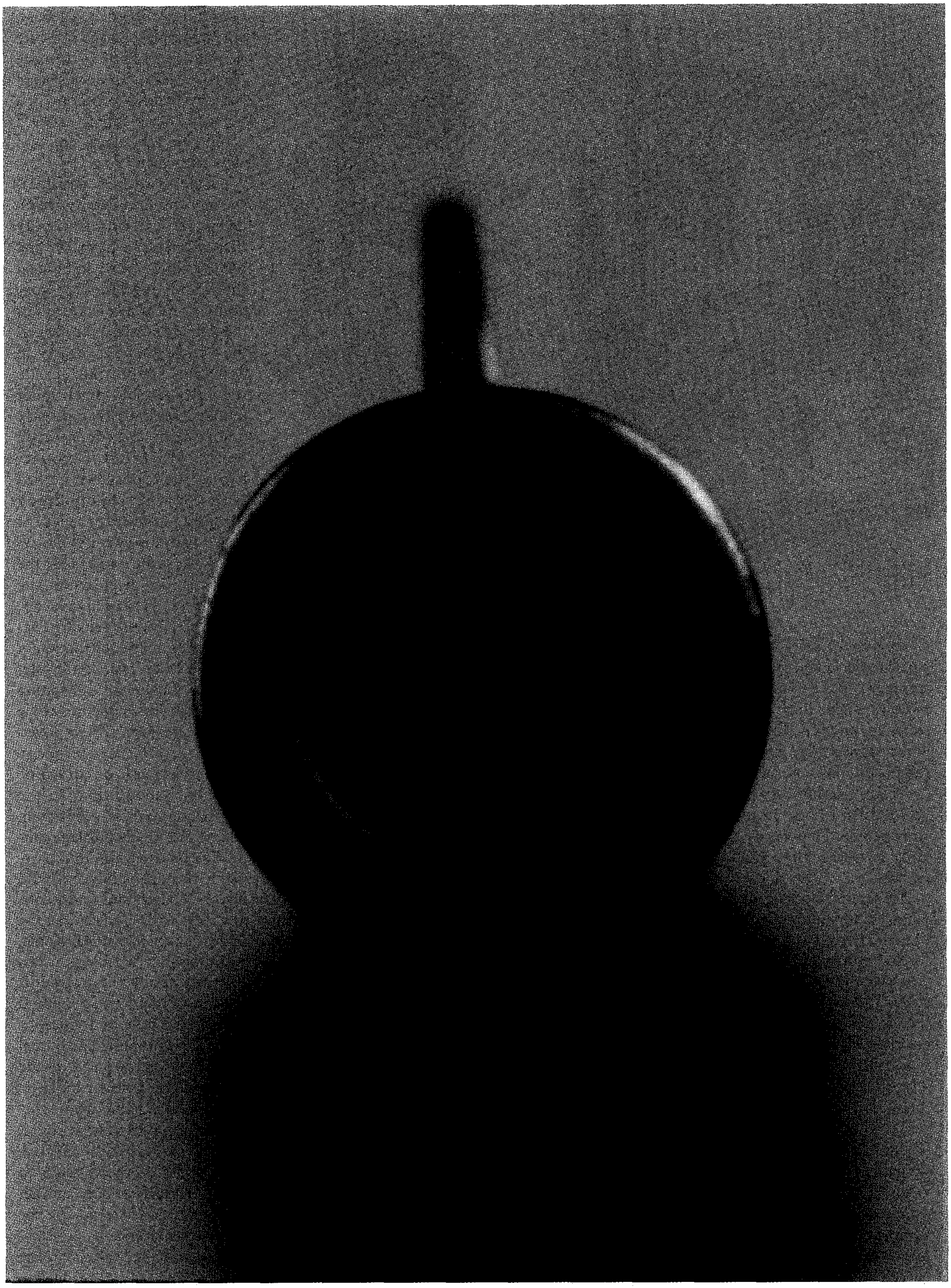
Denny Henigan grew into his father's views, and he didn't touch a gun again until one Sunday afternoon a few years ago, when he walked into a remote Maryland field armed with a cache of weapons, including a .22 rifle, a shotgun, and a .45 pistol—"a veritable arsenal," he would later say—and opened fire. He instantly knew the terrible secret truth about guns: it felt good to hold that dangerous weight in his hand, to feel the explosion of the shell, to breathe the sulfurous air of burnt powder. His brother-in-law, a gun owner, had hoped that if Henigan joined him and some friends for a Sunday-afternoon target shoot he might come to appreciate the sporting charms of firearms. But the experience only left Henigan a more knowing enemy of the gun culture. "It was perfectly easy to understand why people would see this as a recreational tool," he says now. "The problem is I think it's incumbent even on recreational shooters to understand the broader societal implications of the product. They really need to try to put themselves in the shoes of those who live in more urban areas, who have a different view of what firearms do to a community."

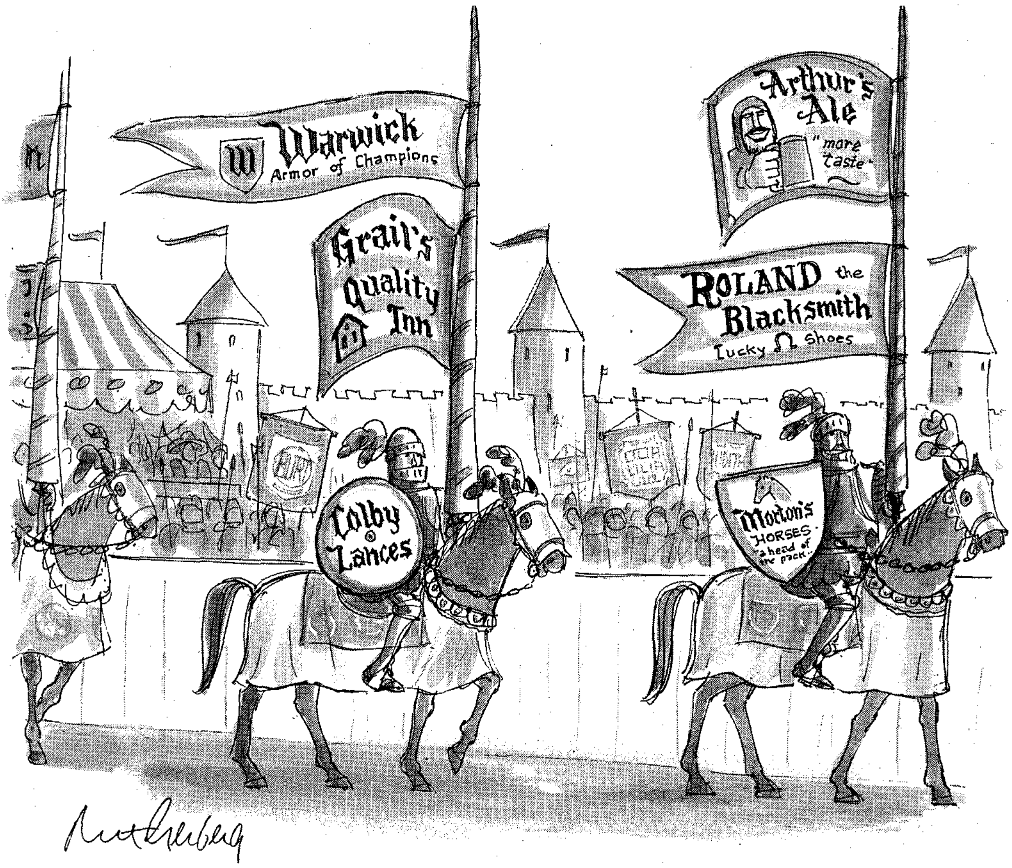
Such single-mindedness is a virtue in the advocacy of any cause, especially in the advocacy of gun control, where the advances are modest and few and arduously gained. Handgun Control, Inc., and its allies fought for seven years to get the "Brady bill" passed into law, in 1993. That was a monumental political achievement, but as a piece of public-policy reform the bill was strikingly modest. It required background checks for purchasers of handguns and imposed a five-day waiting period before the buyer could take possession of the gun, yet it provided no regulation of secondary sales—weapons bought at gun shows, for example—and the five-day-waiting-period provision was replaced last December by less restrictive instant criminal-background checks. Of his fight to pass the Brady bill, Henigan says, "It was long, it was gruelling, you had to have enormous determination, and you realized that you were basically coming face to face with all the great defects in the American political system. Almost like no other issue, the gun issue is an illustration of how a relatively small minority of people"—the gun lobbyists—"backed by disproportionate financial resources, can frustrate public policy that has the overwhelming support of most of the American people. That it would take seven long years to pass a simple waiting period—one would think that a proposal with that kind of public support would pass by voice vote, sort of like Girl Scout Day. And yet it was one of the titanic political struggles in modern American history. We eventually won, but it took everything we had, and it shouldn't have come at so dear a price."

After the passage of the Brady bill and another bill banning nineteen types of assault weapons—partly because of these bills, in fact—the gun-control battle fell into political stalemate. Furious gun-rights advocates, led by the National Rifle Association, helped to deliver control of Congress to the Republicans in 1994, and since that time nearly every significant gun-control proposal has quietly perished.

Then, a year ago this month, Dennis Henigan received a telephone call that would completely alter the chemistry of the gun issue. The call was from the office of Wendell Gauthier, the New Orleans plaintiffs' attorney who was part of the band of lawyers, called the Castano Group, that led the formidable assault against cigarette companies. The lawyers, deemed by their detractors a confederacy of all-star ambulance chasers, were central to a settlement that had the tobacco companies paying $368.5 billion in damages and agreeing

ANDRES SERRANO, "COLD D.A. 45" (1992)/PAULA COOPER GALLERY





to an array of marketing reforms. That particular deal fell apart in Congress last summer, but the tobacco companies will have to make huge payments to the states anyway. Gauthier told Henigan in a meeting last May that the lawyers now intended to take on the gun industry.

"I was frankly very excited," Henigan recalls. "They are not inch-at-a-time people. They throw the long pass, and I tend to be three yards and a cloud of dust."

Henigan's football analogy is tepid language for the mayhem that the "tobacco bar," as it is known, had in mind for the gun industry. "All of a sudden, you have the resources to start a war instead of taking little potshots," says John Coale, a Washington, D.C., plaintiffs' attorney who is a founding member of the Castano Group. "Well, we've started a war. We're the Pope's army. We're his divisions."

JOHN COALE'S Washington office is a gallery devoted to his own image: framed photographs show him with some of the celebrity journalists—Ted Koppel, Dan Rather, Bryant Gumbel, Larry King—who have interviewed him over the years. "This is the shrine," Coale explains. "There's a reason for it, too. I don't have corporate clients, and this is very impressive to the type of clients I do have." Those clients tend to be aggrieved people looking for the litigation equivalent of an eye-gouging alley fight, resulting in a large jury award or a settlement. "A corporation is an entity to make money for its stockholders," Coale says. "It's not an entity with a heart—and it's not supposed to have a heart. It is what it is. And to get a corporation's attention you take their money, or threaten to take their money. It's real simple."

Coale, a Scientologist who carries himself with a slightly rumpled geniality, is long past being defensive about what he does, which is one of the reasons reporters like him. He has referred to himself as an "ambulance chaser" and a "pirate," though he does disavow the Washington *Post's* pointed question "Is John Coale really the sleaziest lawyer in America?" Such terms derive from the nature of Coale's particular branch of the law, which is personal-injury litigation, and from the enterprising (some have said predatory) manner whereby he and a few other top-tier practitioners have transformed it from the lowly whiplash suit into the billion-dollar claim. The breed is all flash and quotable charm; they are heirs to the mantle of the late Melvin Belli, who once said of a client's tearful testimony in a botched-breast-surgery case, "I could hear the angels sing and the cash register ring."

Coale's particular specialty is the high-profile calamity, which he has pursued with an audacity that was evident from his first big case, in 1979, when he sued the Islamic revolutionary government of Iran on behalf of the Americans taken hostage at the United States Embassy in Teheran. At the time, Coale was a young solo practitioner whose caseload was mostly drunk-driving cases rounded up at the Washington courthouse—a circumstance he had fallen to when his budding career as a state prosecutor ended with his own D.W.I. arrest. He lost the case against the Iranians, but he learned the value of boldness, which he applied to the most sensitive aspect of his profession: the solicitation of clients. After the 1996 crash of a ValuJet plane in Florida, Coale sent solicitation packages to the families of victims while they were still arranging their loved ones' funerals, and each package included a photograph of and biographical material about his wife, the CNN legal analyst Greta Van Susteren.

But the case that made Coale's reputation, and that brought him into partnership with the other lawyers who would take on tobacco and guns, concerned the 1984 toxic gas leak at the Union Carbide plant in Bhopal, India. Coale was riding in a Washington taxi when he heard about the accident, which killed more than two thousand people and injured tens of thousands more, and he decided immediately that he must somehow get a piece of the case. He knew nothing about India, so he prevailed upon his tailor, who is Indian, to accompany him to Bhopal. Mother Teresa, who was also in Bhopal, implored survivors of the disaster to "forgive, forgive." Coale offered another message: "'Get Union Carbide' is the slogan," he told reporters.

Coale says that he had the advantage of arriving in Bhopal ahead of Melvin

Belli, who was travelling from San Francisco, and that the news stories about his arrival generated business. "I never had to hustle a case," he recalls. By the time he got to the hotel, he was being followed by hordes of people and media. "There were people lined up as far as the eye could see. So I signed them up." Coale signed representation agreements with more than sixty thousand plaintiffs for what he hoped would become a $350 million settlement. "My biggest regret is that I never picked up the phone and called the 'Guinness Book of World Records,' " he says. As a case, Bhopal was a bust for Coale: he would later hear accusations that he had bribed the mayor of Bhopal and that many of his clients couldn't read the contracts they had signed with him. He never got a settlement, because the case was taken from American court jurisdiction and decided in India. Later, even his tailor sued him for misrepresentation, saying Coale owed him three hundred thousand dollars.

It was in Bhopal, however, that Coale met Wendell Gauthier and several other future partners. In fact, Coale says, they tried to steal his clients from him. Coale recalls that Gauthier and his associates were organizing a committee of lawyers to unify the case, and that they tried to make a deal with him in order to get at his mammoth list. Coale declined the minor role his competitors had in mind for him, whereupon they formed the committee anyway, excluding him. Coale went to Gauthier and conceded defeat, acknowledging that all he had now in Bhopal was the attention of the reporters he had been entertaining since his arrival. "I said, 'I have nothing left to do here, you guys have taken it. The only fun in it I can have is to fuck you,' " Coale recalls telling Gauthier. "He said, 'Wait a minute.' He went back and told those guys, 'Maybe we should cut a deal.' So we cut a deal, and I was in, and I've been in ever since."

Consolidating their forces gave Coale, Gauthier, and the other lawyers an advantage when they went up against big corporations. "It evolved that working together made everybody more money and also litigated the cases better," Coale says. "These cases cost a fortune to litigate, and it has to come out of your pocket. Up until this time, corporations—the defendants—didn't have to worry about getting hit big, because you had some poor schmuck with a part-time secretary on a big case. He just didn't have the money to litigate it. Now *we* do." Individually, the lawyers got rich, and collectively they became powerful. They tested their power in 1994, when Gauthier decided that the lawyers should pool their resources and go after the cigarette companies, which had never admitted the danger their products posed, had remained unified before withering congressional scrutiny, and had never lost a liability case in court.

In forming the syndicate, named the Castano Group after a friend of several of the lawyers who had died from a tobacco-related disease, Gauthier asked each of the firms to ante up a hundred thousand dollars. For Coale, who in the course of litigating some of his own cases had spent as much as fifty thousand dollars a day in expenses, it was a reasonable entry fee. Eventually, the group expanded to include sixty-five firms, and there was then enough money in the pot for a million-dollar office space in New Orleans to use as its headquarters and document depository.

In March, 1994, Gauthier filed a federal class-action liability suit against the major cigarette makers on behalf of ninety million current and former American smokers, on the ground that smoking was not a free individual choice, as the industry had always asserted. Gauthier summarized the suit's theme in the *Wall Street Journal:* "You addicted me, you knew it was addicting, and now you say it's my fault." Such a massive claim was something entirely new in the public arena—not so much a lawsuit as a declaration of a culture war, and the enemy was corporate tobacco. With Coale directing the political and media ends of the case, the plaintiffs' lawyers became the prime creators and marketers of a national narrative entitled "Big Tobacco."

"Oh, hee-hee-hee, we just started in on Big Tobacco," says Coale, delighting in the memory. "You know, it was 'Let's just refer to 'em as Big Tobacco.' Big Tobacco, Big Tobacco, Big Tobacco! Pretty soon, everybody's talking Big Tobacco." Foreshadowing their union with the impassioned Dennis Henigan on the gun issue, the lawyers joined forces with the true believers on the tobacco issue—"the health crowd," Coale calls them—who included the former Surgeon General Dr. C. Everett Koop and Dr. David Kessler, the head of the Food and Drug Administration. Kessler proved a particularly valuable ally, presenting the tobacco companies with yet another front to fight when he sought to classify nicotine as a drug, subject to federal regulation. "We were in touch with people at the F.D.A. all the time," Coale says. "There were a lot of faxes, phone calls,

"I mean, hell, sure, Superman is cute, but Batman looks like he's got money."

and other forms of communication being exchanged." Kessler's greatest contribution was to identify smoking as a "pediatric disease," thus making the fight a battle to save America's children.

The "Big Tobacco" refrain sounded from every corner—in the press and in Presidential speeches—and, as an epithet, it even seeped into the Monica Lewinsky scandal: the independent counsel Kenneth Starr was vilified for being a "Big Tobacco lawyer," which ostensibly prejudiced him against his anti-tobacco prey, the President. The steamroller gained force when eight state attorneys general (eventually joined by others) took up the cause, claiming, among other things, that the tobacco companies owed them the Medicaid costs of caring for sick smokers in their states. In 1996, Coale began to sniff out the scent of settlement, despite vows from Big Tobacco that it would never settle. "We knew that someday they'd want to settle," Coale says. "Someday, everybody does."

Indeed, Bennett LeBow, a financier who controls the smallest entity in Big Tobacco, the Liggett Group, and who was a relative outsider from the industry's point of view, decided to cut his losses and settle. Liggett agreed to pay up to thirty per cent of its pre-tax profits for twenty-five years into a settlement fund for some forty states. Big Tobacco's vaunted unity collapsed, and a year later LeBow broke from the pack again, when Liggett admitted having known that nicotine was addictive. At that point, all that remained of the war against tobacco was the choreography of the dénouement. When Hugh Rodham, a Florida lawyer who had no experience with product liability, was brought into the group as a "lead litigator," few supposed that it was for any reason other than that he was Hillary Clinton's brother. The move proved fruitful when, over Thanksgiving with the First Family in 1996, Rodham suggested to his brother-in-law the President that the White House might want to get involved in settlement talks. Clinton put his most trusted aide, Bruce Lindsey, on the issue, and talks were organized, involving the Castano Group, the state attorneys general and the plaintiffs' lawyers associated with them, Big Tobacco, the health groups, and the White House, which had by then claimed tobacco as a political issue. Coale directed negotiations for the Castano team, and at one point he turned down a $260 billion settlement offer. Finally, a price was agreed upon: Big Tobacco would pay $368.5 billion; it would drop its fight against the F.D.A.'s claim of regulatory jurisdiction; and the Joe Camel school of tobacco advertising would be retired. In return, the industry got some immunity from suits and a predictable schedule of payouts.

Unfortunately for the Castano Group, the deal then went to the Senate, where it became part of John McCain's tobacco bill, which tacked on a provision of $28.5 billion in federal programs for tobacco farmers. There was a stampede to the trough. "These jerks on the left," Coale says, referring to the "health crowd" that clamored for more when the settlement reached Congress. "We even had posters up with what these guys had said they wanted. And here we are giving them thirty, forty times what they ever dreamed of ever having. And they were saying, 'Who cares? Today is today, that was yesterday.' " The McCain bill died last summer, and in November Big Tobacco settled separately with the states, making the lawyers aligned with the state attorneys general quite rich. (A Mississippi firm will take in an estimated $874 million.) The Castano lawyers, who have yet to make any money, and whose own national class-action suit was thrown out of court, were left to pursue their class-action suits one state at a time, which they are doing today; they expect some of their efforts to bear fruit. In any case, the plaintiffs' bar had achieved a remarkable victory in one important regard: they had created a blueprint for an extra-institutional form of politics. The "invincible" tobacco industry had been defeated and a significant public-policy issue decided without the passage of a piece of legislation or the finding of a courtroom verdict.

The humbling of tobacco by the plaintiffs' bar greatly piqued the conservative press, particularly the editorial pages of the *Wall Street Journal*, which raged against the violation of representative-government process by the greedy "tort tong," but Coale's feelings were not hurt. On the contrary, he says, he and his colleagues delighted in their infamy. What's more, it was the *Journal* that gave Gauthier and Coale the idea for their next target. "To everybody I know, when the *Journal* goes after you it's a fabulous thing, and when they do it by name it's just great. So we're always watching this, and they start ranting and raving about the whole thing—'What will these lawyers do next? They'll get guns! They'll get alcohol!' And we said, 'What about this? What *are* we going to do?' And I think it was Wendell who said, 'What *about* this gun stuff?' And that's how it started—talking about the *Wall Street Journal*."

IN 1989, when the Center to Prevent Handgun Violence hired Dennis Henigan to start a litigation unit, it was in the hope of accomplishing through the courts what gun-control advocates had been unable to achieve legislatively. Such use of the judiciary is an abiding source of annoyance to conservatives: they view it as a subversion of our representative system. It is an approach, though, that Henigan, for one, cheerfully defends as a means of achieving social change. "Litigation had always had a central role to play in other issues involving social change," Henigan says. "Clearly, the civil-rights movement could not have accomplished what it did without Thurgood Marshall and folks like him conducting a sustained war that complemented the legislative effort. You could talk about virtually any other public-policy effort—the environment, consumer protection, just down the list—and litigation always played a role."

Henigan carefully studied the record of litigation that had been brought against gunmakers, and he found little encouragement. "It was basically devastation as far as the eye could see, from a plaintiff's point of view," he says. "Virtually all the victims who had brought lawsuits had lost." There had been a cluster of suits brought by plaintiffs' attorneys in the nineteen-seventies and eighties, making the product-liability claim that handguns were defective in design, because they were so harmful to society. Courts rejected those claims. "They're *supposed* to be dangerous," Henigan says. "The gun user could make a product-liability argument only if the gun didn't work, or if it blew up, or if it didn't hit its target because there was a defect in the gun."

"We've been wandering in the desert for forty years. But he's a man—would he ever ask directions?"

Henigan's challenge was to find a legal theory that could be used to blame the gunmaker, and he found it in one of the oldest and simplest legal principles: negligence law. Henigan focussed on the principle of "third-party liability," a concept holding that a defendant in a civil case can be found liable if negligence or carelessness on his part has increased the risk that someone else will commit a criminal act. If, for example, a landlord puts a functional but weak lock on the door of an apartment and a tenant is victimized because of a criminal entry, the landlord may be found liable in a civil suit. In applying the theory to guns, Henigan shaped an argument that gunmakers, in manufacturing and marketing their lethal products, were, in essence, inviting the criminal use that some people would make of the guns.

Henigan waited patiently for the right case to test his theory, and it presented itself in 1993, when Gian Luigi Ferri, a disgruntled former client of a San Francisco law firm called Pettit & Martin, entered the office armed with two assault weapons and a .45, and went on a rampage. Within minutes, eight people were dead and six were injured. Two of Ferri's guns were the infamous Intratec TEC-DC9 model, which is considered an "assault-type" pistol. The gun's chief asset is its firepower—the capacity to cover an area with a quick spray of fire. Henigan, representing the families of some of the victims of the shooting, used his third-party-liability theory to file suit against Intratec. "Our assertion is that it was negligent to sell to the civilian market a weapon of war," Henigan says. "The Intratec TEC-DC9 was designed essentially for close combat. This was a gun that would not be economically viable to sell to the conventional gun market. It simply has no use. But there is a market for it, and Intratec knew what the market was. . . . The market was what we call the firepower market—consumers who are looking for firepower as the central feature of a weapon. And that could be survivalists, paramilitary types, militia types, criminals. And it was also Gian Luigi Ferri. He was planning, essentially, a military assault on this law firm, where his objective was to take out as many people as he could find, very quickly."

The case scored a significant breakthrough for the gun-control lobby when the judge, James Warren, did not dismiss Henigan's suit outright, as had been the customary fate of product-liability suits against gunmakers. This decision validated Henigan's legal theory, and, more important, it opened the discovery process, which gave Henigan two years to root around for Intratec documents and other potential evidence. Then came the familiar setback. In 1997, as the suit drew closer to trial, Intratec made the customary motion for summary judgment dismissing the case. To Henigan's surprise, the Judge granted it, ruling that Intratec's only responsibility was to produce a legal product that functioned properly. "It was crushing," Henigan says. He filed an appeal that is still pending.

Whatever the outcome, Henigan's long labors were not wasted. He had become the authority on anti-gun litigation, and that made him indispensable to a group of plaintiffs' lawyers that was about to declare war on the gun industry. "He's a walking encyclopedia—he knows everything about the issue," Coale says. "If you're doing a case, you have a person who knows everything about the issue. You would want him on board, no matter what the case is."

Henigan travelled to New Orleans to meet with the Castano lawyers and to conduct what he calls, reflecting his own political grounding, a "teach-in" on the subject of gun control. He talked about his new legal theory, and he also told the lawyers the surprising fact that the Second Amendment, which guarantees citizens the right to bear arms, almost never comes into play in gun-control litigation, because there is little case law on the subject, and both sides are reluctant to force a Supreme Court ruling that might go against them. The amendment's use by gun-rights advocates is mainly political.

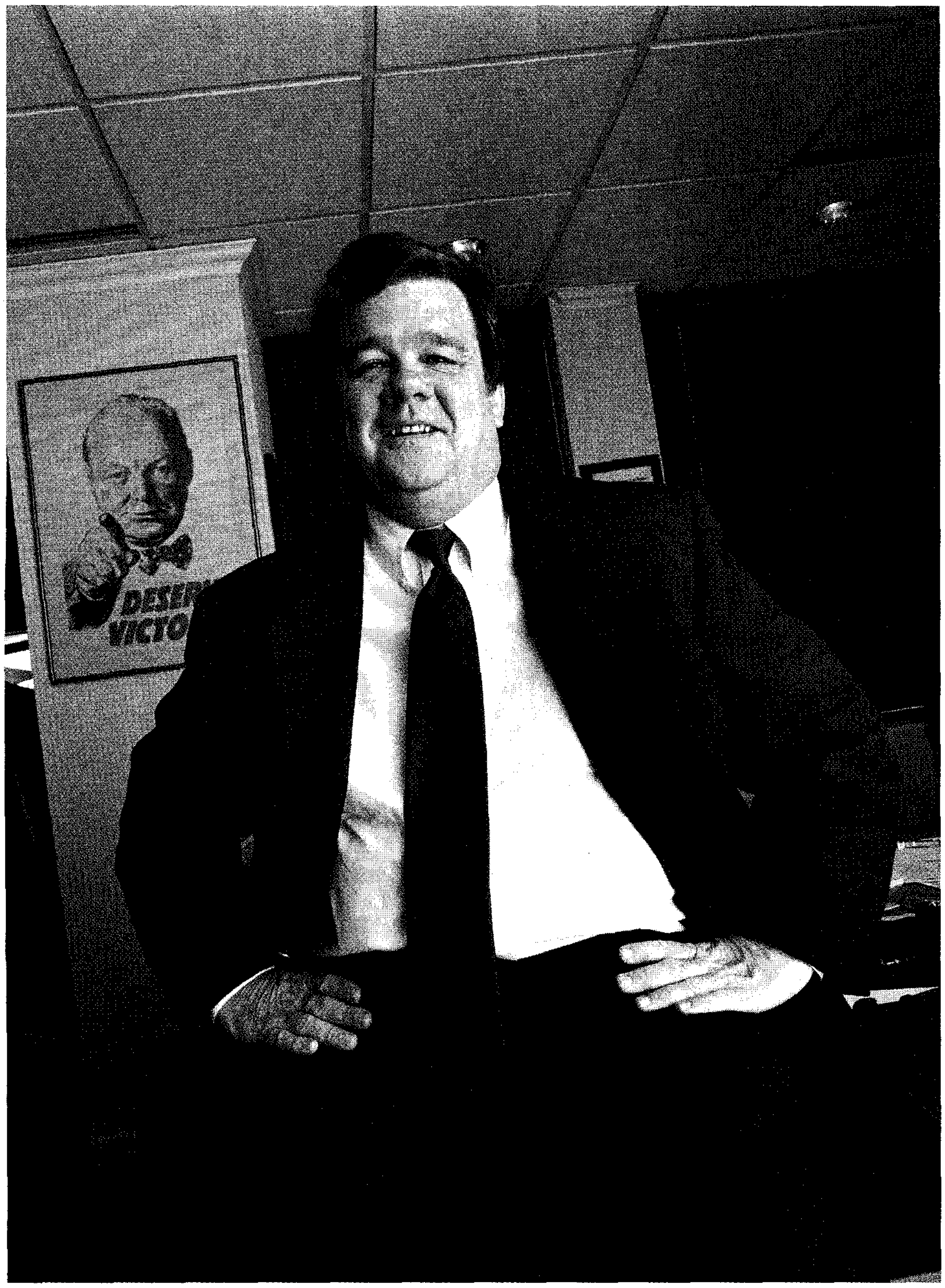
The most important lessons Henigan conveyed to the Castano lawyers, however, had nothing to do with litigation. "A lot of what we discussed was how to talk about the gun issue to the general public," he recalls. "This is a war that has a lot of different fronts. One of the fronts is the battle for the hearts and minds of the American people."

Henigan believes that it is imperative to steer the argument about guns away from the problematic area of criminal use, with its inconvenient focus on criminals, and toward the matter of guns in the home—incidents of suicide, accidental shootings, and domestic violence. This is an important shift, because it allows the gun debate to be recast as a health issue. Henigan told the Castano lawyers about the many studies that have considered guns in an epidemiological context; in other words, guns should be thought of as pathogens, and gun ownership, perhaps, as a disease.

"This is new learning, but it is learning that we believe is beginning to penetrate the public consciousness," Henigan says. "For example, you have case-control studies that have actually been able to estimate the increased risk to a family of bringing a gun into the home. Most gun deaths in this country are not associated with criminals. Most gun deaths are actually suicides and unintentional shootings. In fact, there are more suicides with guns than there are homicides with guns. And so the idea that guns are a public-health issue, in addition to a crime issue, is another way in which the debate is changing." In one such study, published in the *American Journal of Public Health*, it was explained that the researchers' "methods are the same as those used to detect the association between cigarette smoking and lung cancer. The topic is different. The risk factor of interest is ownership of a handgun. The disease is violent death."

So the war on guns has its version of David Kessler's designation of smoking as a "pediatric disease," and that version inevitably leads to the argument that gunmakers and their defenders knowingly mislead the public when they defend guns as a safety precaution—just as Big Tobacco misled the public about the addictiveness of cigarettes.

"The gun-violence problem is more than the problem of guns in the hands of bad people," Henigan says. "It's also a problem of guns in the hands of good people. Good people who have been lied to about the dangers of guns in the home, and have been given cause to believe that their best security is to not only have a gun in the home but—the logical corollary—to have it loaded and accessible. The industry is telling people, 'What you need to be worried about is that intruder coming through the sliding glass door.' In other words, you basically have an industry that has been actually advocating the purchase of this product as a way of increasing the safety of the family, when in fact the scientific evidence that is now pouring in indicates that the decision to bring a gun into the home actually increases a risk to the family. So at



The attorney John Coale, former gun-industry spokesman Richard Feldman, and gun-control advocate Dennis Henigan. Henigan

the same time that they are engaged in this misrepresentation of the relative risks of guns they are also doing nothing to design guns in a way that would reduce risk."

Having learned an important lesson about the costs of a massive class-action suit in the tobacco wars, the Castano Group chose as its vehicle for the campaign against guns a series of suits filed by cities against the industry. "We want to create a credible threat of liability," Henigan says. "The more cities that file, the greater is the threat. So what you really want is a diversity of cases in lots of different regions, lots of different courts to create the greatest threat of liability and to provide the industry with the greatest incentive to reform itself." As for the cities' incentive, the Castano Group made cities an irresistible offer: the lawyers would pay for the litigation, asking only for a portion of any damages won—twenty per cent of a settlement, thirty per cent of a jury award.

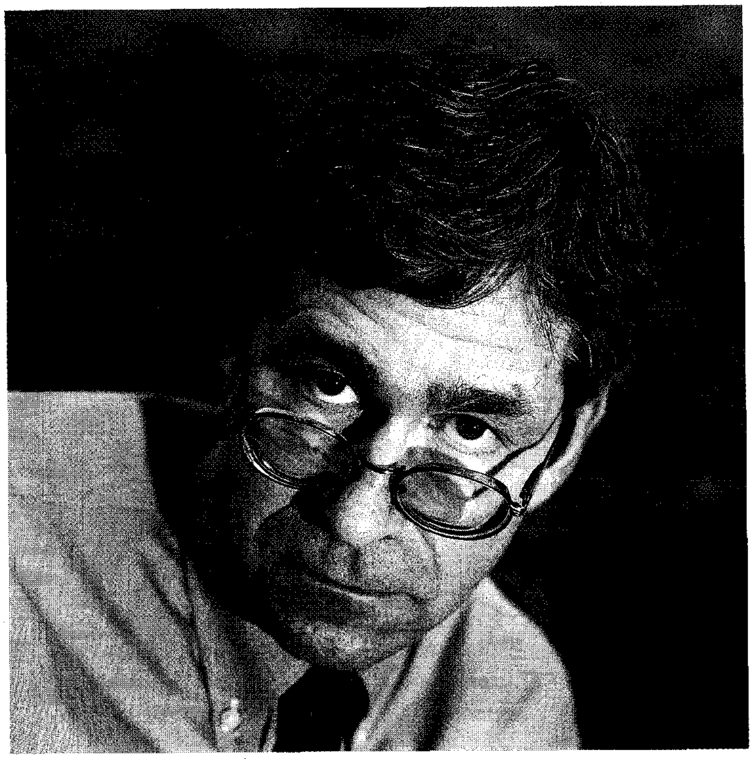
Last October, at the Castano Group's prodding, Mayor Marc Morial, of New Orleans, announced that the city had filed suit against fifteen gun manufacturers, and also against five local dealers and three industry trade organizations, seeking compensation for the costs of emergency police and medical responses to gun violence. Morial said that this move was to be the gun industry's "day of atonement." Henigan told reporters, "Guns must now become the next tobacco." The gun industry, he told the Boston *Globe*, had to be held responsible for an "unforgivable record of callous disregard for the safety of children."

New Orleans was soon followed by several other cities, including Atlanta, Miami, St. Louis, and Chicago. Coale, Henigan, and their team hope to get at least a dozen cities on board, and perhaps as many as twenty. If twenty cities do bring suits, defending against them, according to some estimates, could cost the gun manufacturers as much as a million dollars a day.

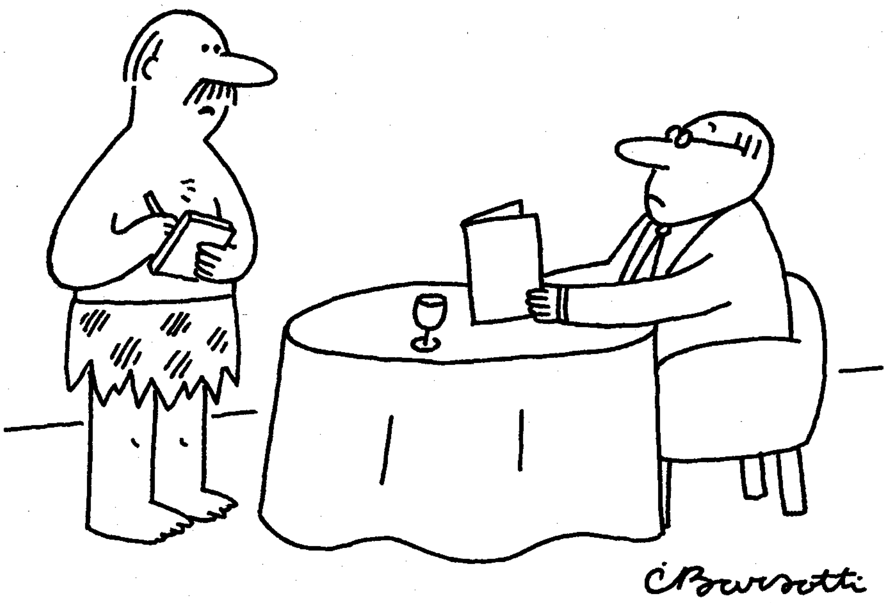
The gun industry, like tobacco, has always defended itself vigorously, and successfully. But, as in the war against tobacco, winning in court isn't necessarily the objective of the lawyers. The cities' lawsuits have ignited the gun issue and created a political moment, and that is all part of the plan.

"You just stir things up," Coale says. "I mean, look, the gun issue's all over the place now. A year ago, it wasn't. You just stir it up, and there ain't nothing like a good fight to stir it up. We've got bills now flying all over Congress. . . . We've got Bob Barr introducing a bill that would probably electrocute me (ha-ha-ha), and you've got Barbara Boxer coming in with 'Well, whatever your bill says, my bill says the opposite.' You've got Torricelli, you've got Patrick Kennedy, you've got all this activity. And we're stirring it up. And we stir it up and stir it up, and you know what happens? Eventually, the industry has to see us as the only reasonable people in town. It ain't gonna be reasonable up on that Hill. And we are reasonable (ha-ha-ha). That's what it comes down to."

ED SHULTZ, the president of America's largest manufacturer of handguns, Smith & Wesson, in Springfield, Massachusetts, has a memorable way of describing the situation that is facing his industry, and he illustrates it by using the fingers of one hand. On one extreme (the pinkie) are gun control's true believers, who personally feel that handguns have no place in society. On the other extreme (the thumb) are the gun owners



ites studies suggesting that guns be thought of as pathogens, and gun ownership, perhaps, as a disease. Photographs by Harry Benson.



"Oh, we've been a theme restaurant for about a month now."

represented by the National Rifle Association, who maintain that the Second Amendment is an absolute guarantor against government regulation. Standing next to the gun-control true believers (ring finger) are people who sympathize with the cause and support "reasonable" gun-control measures. Standing next to the gun owners (index finger) are people in the industry, the manufacturers and distributors, and such, who have businesses to run and payrolls to meet, and covet peace. "But right in the middle," Shultz says, extending his middle finger firmly upward, "this group right here, are your John Coales. O.K.?"

Shultz was making the point that in his view John Coale and Wendell Gauthier don't care one way or the other about guns, or about tobacco, except for the possible payoff that their legal wars may bring. But the fact that Shultz, a polite, grandfatherly fifty-seven-year-old Iowan, told the story in the way he did, in a public place—we were in an airport V.I.P. lounge—and continued to reflexively raise his middle finger whenever John Coale's name came up, may suggest the degree of distress that he and his industry colleagues feel just now.

Shultz came to Smith & Wesson in 1992, an outsider not only to the company but to the gun industry. He'd had a successful management career in the office-furniture business, and Smith & Wesson, which was founded in 1852 and was the repository of a proud tradition, had become a company in trouble. Its factory and its equipment were ancient, its business mode was outdated, and its famous revolvers—long the quality standard—were being replaced in police departments around the country with sleeker, lighter, more powerful weapons made by competitors. Shultz had begun an ambitious turnaround program for the old company, capitalizing on the Smith & Wesson name to diversify into a product line that ranged from wristwatches to police bicycles.

Shultz's plan succeeded and the company recovered, but the controversies surrounding its core business, guns, have been an abiding and unanticipated source of anxiety. "When I came to Smith & Wesson, there was virtually none of the stigma that you encounter today," he says. "The industry was a proud industry. The company was a very proud company, and still is. We were in the mode of believing that we were doing things that were very important for preserving security and freedom and law and order and those kinds of things." With the battles over the Brady bill and assault weapons, and six years of an anti-gun Administration, Shultz says, he and his company unhappily found themselves cast in the Merchants of Death role. "In 1992, when I told somebody I was president and C.E.O. of Smith & Wesson, they were tremendously impressed," he says. "Today, there are people who own guns that are impressed by it, but the other folks sort of look at me as if I'm some sort of person that goes out and delivers terrible, dark things. I'm depicted as a gunrunner, or as a trafficker in bad things. One day, we woke up, and all at once this other thing started happening."

Like everyone else in the gun industry, Shultz dismisses the notion that responsibility for gun violence lies anywhere but at the hands of people who criminally use guns. He sounds the industry theme that there are plenty of gun laws already (twenty thousand, according to the N.R.A.), saying that if the Administration really wanted to do something about gun violence it would make sure that those laws are enforced. He has a point. There have been thousands of reports of guns being brought to school grounds in recent years, but last year there were only eight federal prosecutions. Although gun-control advocates such as Dennis Henigan complain that the Brady law does not do enough, Shultz responds by saying that if Brady is not effective it is only because its provisions are not fully enforced. The law's mandated background check is credited with stopping the sale of about two hundred and fifty thousand handguns to felons or other unqualified buyers, but virtually none of those attempted purchases, which constituted crimes, resulted in prosecutions. In 1997, Shultz went on to say, the city of Richmond, Virginia, which had one of the worst gun-related crime rates in the country, undertook a program called Project Exile, wherein a United States prosecutor pursued and prosecuted felons caught carrying or attempting to buy a gun, and sent most of them to federal prison for a minimum of five years. The results have been dramatic, including a thirty-six-per-cent decline in gun homicides and a thirty-seven-per-cent drop in armed robberies. The N.R.A. helped to sponsor the launch of a similar program in Philadelphia, and the organization's leadership has noted a decided lack of enthusiastic support from the Clinton Justice Department.

"Find 'em, put 'em in jail, and it works," says Shultz. "The media basically think that's stupid. But Project Exile works. A guy comes in, breaks the law, he's in jail."

Shultz scoffs at the notion of guns as a disease, and at the idea that the industry somehow misleads the public into believing that guns are not dangerous products. "Since 1852, when we started the company, no one has ever said that if this gun is misused it isn't very dangerous," he says. "I think everybody understands . . . that a gun is not something that you want to be in front of. If you are in front of this thing and someone pulls the trigger, something serious is going to happen."

Shultz believes that the lawsuits brought against his industry by the Sarah Brady group are politically motivated, and that John Coale and the other Castano lawyers are driven by greed. "If this thing progresses," he says, "the capital in the gun industry will move to one of two places—either to the lawyers that are bringing the charges or to the ones that are defending. In either case, the lawyers win."

But Shultz agrees with Coale about at least one thing: the lawsuits are inseparable from the dynamics of the political-media culture, and it's a war. "What has happened here is a media and political creation of an issue," he says. "It is one of those things that are perfect for politics, because there are people on both sides of the issue. . . . The law is on our side. There's no question in my mind—none—that we will win every court case. The court of public opinion is what's the problem."

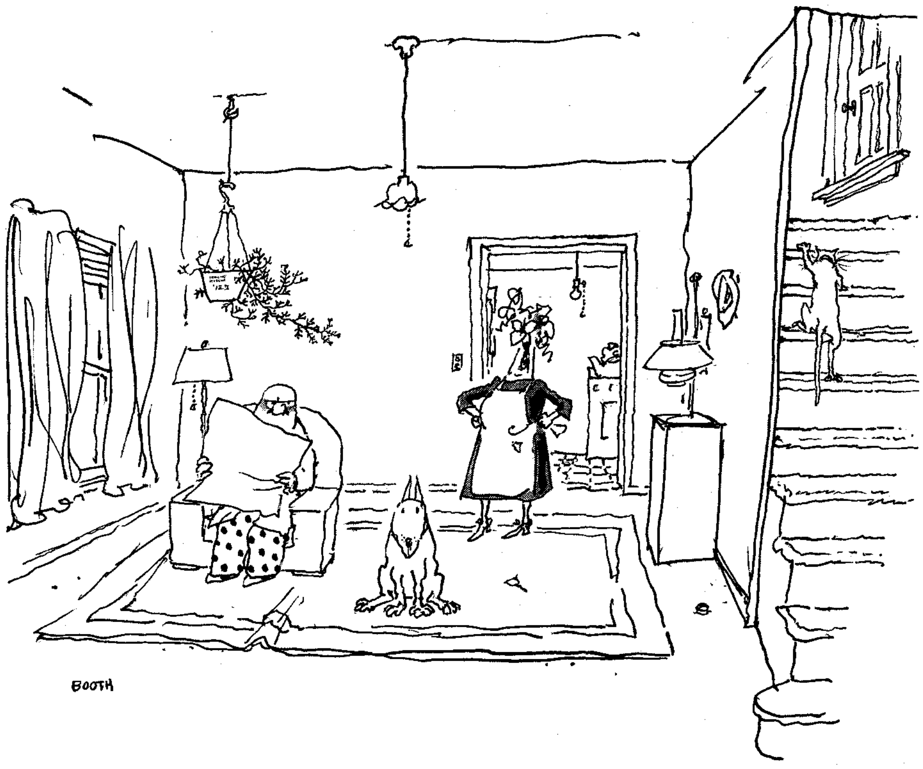
Shultz knows that his opponents are expert at manipulating the Zeitgeist ("These guys are smart," he says, raising the middle finger), and he takes little comfort in industry polls showing that a large majority of those Americans who have an opinion on the matter (which isn't many) oppose further limits on private gun ownership. "One of the great things about a democracy is that the majority decides what it's going to do," he says. "One of the terrible things about a democracy is that you recognize that you're in the minority. There's still eighty-five per cent of the people in the United States who believe that people should have the right to own a gun. Now, if that drops to forty-five per cent, then I'll go up there and padlock the door and it'll be over."

ED SHULTZ'S position has made him a critical figure in the unfolding political contest over guns, because he is able to act independently. That sometimes means taking a stance that differs from the N.R.A.'s. Two years ago, he unilaterally decreed that all new Smith & Wesson handguns would be shipped with a trigger-lock device as an added safety measure. It might seem a modest enough marketing decision—Smith & Wesson's research showed that many of its customers were women and first-time gun owners who were worried about accidents but were not inclined to invest in an expensive gun safe. In the besieged and edgy gun industry, though, any such move carries multiple messages, with complicated implications. There had been talk of federal legislation mandating locking devices. Was Shultz's move a message to the N.R.A.? Would the rest of the industry be forced to follow? Would a Smith & Wesson lock work on another gun? Would the device delay response time in an emergency?

The lock is a simple little device: two pins that fit through the trigger and stop its movement. But it is bound up in a debate that has been going on for years about making guns safer through technology. The Holy Grail is the so-called "smart gun," which will recognize its owner by his fingerprints or hand size, and at least one company, Colt, has thrown its resources into producing a practical smart gun. But the subject has polarized gunmakers, causing some to worry that marketing smart guns will make them potentially liable for all those two hundred million "dumb" guns that they have been selling to the public. Indeed, that is one of the allegations in the New Orleans lawsuit, which accuses the industry of deliberately suppressing smart-gun technology. The N.R.A., which operates from the "slippery slope" premise—that any diminution of free and open access to gun ownership will inevitably lead to something worse, until eventually guns are banned and tyranny reigns—opposed Smith & Wesson's trigger-lock move, but Shultz says, "If it saved one life, and if it was do-able, it was worth it."

Shultz, who still owns his family's farm in Iowa, grew up in the gun culture, and says that as a gun owner and a member of the N.R.A. "when they come to take the guns, they'll have to pry the last one out of my hands." But as a businessman he says, "I've got to do what's best for Smith & Wesson."

That is why when Shultz joined the business he became one of the strongest supporters of a new gun-industry trade organization called the American Shooting Sports Council, which positioned itself as the industry's alternative political voice to the N.R.A. The council was founded in 1989, amid the gathering assault-weapons debate—a time when the industry was losing ground in



"You and I haven't had an in-house date in a long, long, long time!"

public opinion, and was losing battles in state legislatures and on Capitol Hill. The N.R.A. represents gun owners; the A.S.S.C. was founded to lobby on behalf of manufacturers, distributors, and retailers—constituencies that were broadly allied but whose interests sometimes conflicted.

Richard Feldman, the A.S.S.C.'s second executive director, joined the group in 1991, and quickly came to personify the tensions between some factions of the industry and the N.R.A. Feldman describes himself as the unlikeliest of gun advocates—"I'm from Long Island, I'm Jewish, I'm the son of a psychoanalyst and a trained social worker"—and he was once a gun-control supporter. But he was viewed by some as the firearms industry's most effective voice and the ideal moderate counterpart to John Coale and his colleagues, on the other side of the gun war.

Loquacious, hyperkinetic, and media savvy, Feldman came to the job with a record as a political operative, a showman with a knife-fighter's instinct. He was a regional political director for the N.R.A. in the mid-eighties, and worked there again in the early nineties, when he helped to conceive and organize a tax-revolt campaign that helped unseat New Jersey's Democratic governor Jim Florio, who had earlier supported and signed an assault-weapons ban. "We couldn't get him on the gun issue, because in New Jersey it played better his way than our way," Feldman says.

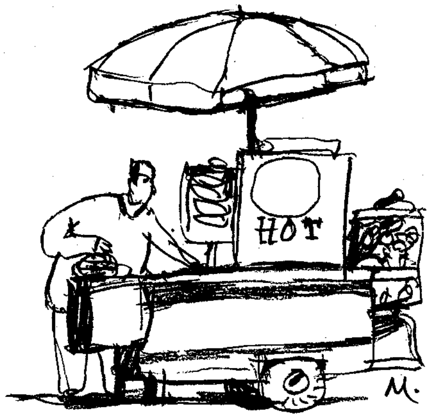
At the A.S.S.C., Feldman worked energetically to strengthen and consolidate the council's position as an alternative voice to the N.R.A., a strategy that some criticized as self-promotional but that Feldman defends as politically pragmatic, since it reflected his constituents' business realities: "Instead of stepping around an obstacle, ideological groups say, 'This obstacle ought not be here. I will spend my time, money, and effort removing this obstacle.' Business groups go *around* obstacles."

It happened to be an ideal moment for distancing oneself from the N.R.A., which was losing members (in 1995 it had 3.5 million members; today it has 2.8 million) and public favor as it came to be perceived as an extremist organization. The rifle association was seriously hurt by its own missteps and by bad luck, as when a long-planned advertising campaign criticizing the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms for abusing citizens' civil rights was unveiled the week of the 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building, in Oklahoma City. Former President George Bush declared himself outraged by the organization's reference to the B.A.T.F. as "jackbooted government thugs," and he publicly renounced his membership.

Feldman seized such opportunities to position the A.S.S.C. as the moderate alternative to the N.R.A., telling an Atlanta *Journal* reporter that "the current board of the N.R.A. does not represent the mainstream N.R.A. member, let alone the mainstream gun owner." That particular comment earned pointed criticism from the N.R.A. ("Oh, you'd have thought that I'd hocked a loogie on the Ark of the Covenant," Feldman said.) But the reaction was nothing next to the enmity Feldman generated two years ago.

Rahm Emmanuel, then a White House adviser, read a news article about Ed Shultz's plan to make guns with trigger locks, and he saw a political opportunity. The Administration was advocating mandatory child-safety locks, and the President had signed an executive order requiring federal law-enforcement agencies to issue locks with all guns. The N.R.A. and its allies in Congress opposed the idea. Emmanuel sent the article about Shultz to the President, who read it and sent it back with a note asking, Emmanuel says, "Is there any way we can hold him up as a model and get movement on the issue?" It was a characteristically clever impulse on Clinton's part: with Ed Shultz as a White House poster boy for reasonable gun safety there would be an added level of discomfort when the N.R.A.'s mostly Republican allies opposed the measure.

Emmanuel telephoned Shultz and invited him to the White House, where he asked Shultz to help organize a gun-industry group to participate in a White House event promoting the gun-safety measure. But in the gun industry the Clinton White House is enemy territory; Shultz was not about to venture there alone. On Shultz's recommendation, Emmanuel contacted Feldman, who recognized an opportunity. Feldman knew that gun locks of some sort were now inevitable—the executive order meant that manufacturers would be supplying locks on their federal sales anyway—and he concluded that it would be foolish to ask the industry's allies on the Hill to take a stand against something that would seem so reasonable to the public. Feldman says he planned a preëmptive press conference with, among others, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott and Senator Orrin Hatch, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, where it would be announced that most of the handgun makers represented by the A.S.S.C. would voluntarily include locking devices with their guns, beginning in January of this year. When that event was scotched by N.R.A. allies, and Lott and Hatch withdrew, Feldman and a few A.S.S.C. members, including Shultz, agreed to go to the White House and announce the deal anyway. They chatted amiably, and posed for photographs with the man who many in their industry believed was plotting their undoing.



The Rose Garden Event, as it came to be known in industry lore, marked the final, irreparable split between Feldman and the N.R.A. The N.R.A.'s executive vice-president, Wayne LaPierre, who saw the event as a disastrous concession, wrote a furious letter to those members of the industry who had particpated in the photo op with a man who wanted "to eradicate the gun culture." LaPierre wrote, "You are not selling firearms to Bill Clinton and Janet Reno. And he is not selling firearms safety to the public. He is selling a means to an end. Your end. You have helped Clinton to co-opt, to steal yet another issue. And he will use it to destroy you."

On the other hand, the news media loved the Rose Garden strategy, as Feldman had known they would. An editorial in the Atlanta *Journal* said that the industry's locking-device agreement

LAST WALK

The two of you, thirty-seven years married,
and only to one another, I should add—

some odd stone or metal for that, or medal—
arm in arm, old, stable (your new trick,

except at your age you don't learn new tricks,
more as if all your lives you'd understudied

age and stability), me buzzing round you
like an electron, first one side then the other,

the long walk by the concrete-bedded river,
the Sempt, whose tributaries arrive in pipes,

the heavy July whiff of river and linden,
low water, weeds, a few fish,

the ducks beside themselves at nightfall,
the unfailingly noisy dog and cherished for it,

the last remaining farm in the new suburb,
alteingesessen, a hayfield among garden plots,

all the way up to the quarry pool,
the gigantic activity of the new airport

racing day and night to completion like a new book,
and somewhere in it all, your tenderness

for a firefly.

—MICHAEL HOFMANN

with the Administration should be a "model for resolving lots of public policy issues that face American society." The Dallas *Morning News* called Feldman's group "the voice of compromise and moderation," and declared that the N.R.A. "continues to labor under the weight of its hard-line image."

As it happens, John Coale is counting on just such a schism. The principal aim of all that has happened so far—the "stirring up," as Coale puts it—is to get the firearms industry to the negotiating table and, eventually, to some sort of settlement, for he is confident that the N.R.A. will reject all compromise. "The trick is to separate the N.R.A. from the industry," he says. Recalling the war against Big Tobacco, Coale notes that one of the biggest breakthroughs came when Bennett LeBow and his Liggett Group split off from the pack. But Ed Shultz is adamant about never settling the lawsuits—and points out that the gun industry, compared with tobacco, is minuscule and has no money to be extorted. "We have nothing to negotiate," he says. "There's nothing there, O.K.? Nothing. Zero. There are no contingency plans. The only contingency plan is when you give them the keys"—that is, go bankrupt. "All they can get is the business that they hate."

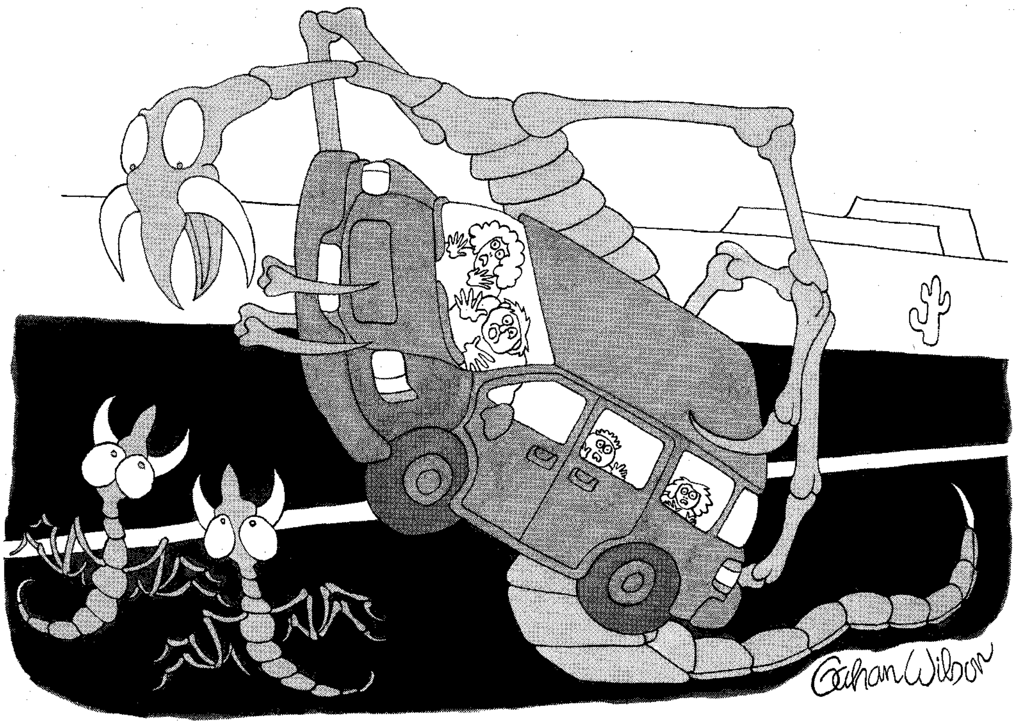
Coale is unconvinced. "I've never been in a case where they didn't say that at first," he says, with a shrug. "I mean, they always say that crap." Coale believes that the gunmakers will eventually realize that their interests are better served by compromise, an awakening that can happen only if they divorce themselves from the hard-line rhetoric of the N.R.A. "It's the industry's problem that we're interested in, it's not the N.R.A.'s problem," he says. "The N.R.A.'s problem is all those myths and bogeymen and everything that are out there. The gun industry—they're in business to make money. They're in business not to be at war but to produce their product and sell it. We're in business to make sure that they produce a safe product and sell it with some responsibility. All the other stuff is hot air."

In February of this year, Coale began to meet secretly with Feldman and the A.S.S.C.'s chief lobbyist in Washington, Robert Ricker. "If there are going to be any negotiations, you need to start to explore," Coale says. "To show them that all is not lost. There's such mythology on the gun industry and the N.R.A., and there's such mythology on us. And kind of break through that, and show these guys that we're like them. We're looking for a solution. We're not looking for a death penalty here."

Feldman and Ricker had let the members of their board know what was going on, and most approved. "It seems to me to be a basic rule of good sense that you always want to know what the other side has to say," says Paul Jannuzzo, vice-president and general counsel of Glock, a gunmaker. "It doesn't mean you have to make an offer or accept an offer. But I always want to know what the hell they're thinking."

Coale and Ricker met several times, and their talks began to acquire substance. A proposal to limit a person's gun purchases to one a month was discussed. "The safety issue came up, research and development and further safety issues came up," Coale says. "Now what happened was the N.R.A. caught wind of this, and that's where all the shit hit the fan."

A few weeks later, the *Wall Street Journal* published a story about Coale and Ricker's meetings. That story not only ended the talks but signalled the end of Feldman's tenure at the A.S.S.C. The N.R.A. and its allies in the industry had long distrusted Feldman, and his talks with Coale finally tore it for the hard-liners. Through another association, the industry had created an emergency fund, the Hunting and Shooting Sports Heritage Fund, built with a voluntary one-per-cent contribution made by the manu-



"The trick is in shucking them out of their shells."

facturers, to finance a unified legal, political, and public-relations defense against the lawsuits. The A.S.S.C., needing its share of that fund in order to remain viable, bent to the pressure to fire Feldman, and Feldman's departure was announced not long afterward.

Coale saw this as an ominous development. It meant that the N.R.A. and the hard-liners were in the ascendant on the other side. "We're back at the starting point now," he observed.

Coale had been right to fear the N.R.A. Its characteristic response to the cities' lawsuits was all-out war. The organization's president, Charlton Heston, went to the industry's big annual event, the Shot Show in Atlanta, and announced that the gunmakers' fight was now the N.R.A.'s fight, too. The N.R.A. marshalled its forces at the statehouse level and undertook an aggressive plan to counter the lawsuits, by sponsoring legislation that made such suits illegal. The effort was an astonishing success. The State of Georgia passed the N.R.A.'s bill, which nullified Atlanta's suit against the industry, and the N.R.A. had similar initiatives in a number of other states, and was succeeding on other issues as well. In Colorado there were two prized N.R.A. proposals—one of which would have greatly relaxed restrictions on carrying a concealed weapon, in some cases even to the parking lots of the state's schools (provided they remained locked in cars).

It was a high moment for the N.R.A., whose members were eagerly looking forward to the association's annual meeting and gun show in Denver in May. On April 20th, *USA Today* published a column noting that the N.R.A. "is about to take a victory lap" in Denver.

That morning, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, armed with, among other weapons, a TEC-DC9, went on a rampage at Columbine High School, in Littleton, and killed thirteen people and themselves.

On the day of the assault, Dennis Henigan was visiting New Orleans with his teen-age son, a prospective student at Tulane. After dropping his son off on the campus, Henigan stopped by the Castano Group's office, where he was told about the shooting. He instantly recognized its usefulness to his cause. "When they told me the possible death toll," Henigan recalls, "I said, 'This changes everything.' "

Later that week, back in his office in Washington, Henigan said, "I knew that this was going to have a profound effect on the dynamics of the gun issue. Not only with respect to the lawsuits, but it was going to cause people who were previously uninvolved, who agree with us intellectually, to say, 'I've had enough, and I'm going to do something about it.' I'm telling you, our phones have not stopped ringing. We're getting hundreds of calls from people who want to get involved. People who are horrifed. It's an issue that they basically agreed with us on, but it had not become part of their own personal public agenda. And all of a sudden it's at the top of that agenda." Handgun Control, Inc., was already busily working its contacts in Washington and in statehouses, hoping to press its momentary advantage. "Obviously, you want to capture that sense of urgency, how people feel in the wake of a tragedy like this," he said. "But you have to convert it into long-term activism, long-term concern."

Henigan was right about the public reaction to Littleton and its effect on the gun issue. The day after the shooting, the television talk-show host Rosie O'Donnell urged the women in her audience to get the guns out of their houses. "I know it's an amendment," she said. "I know it's in the Constitution. But you know what? Enough is enough." Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura's first reaction was to speculate that if Columbine school officials had been carrying concealed weapons, as would be allowed in a measure he favors in his state, the tragedy might have been avoided. The public reaction to Ventura's statement was so intensely negative that he felt obliged to apologize and retract it.

The day after Littleton, I spoke with Coale, who observed that the N.R.A. was about to have a very hard time. "I believe that what happened yesterday brings us closer to, if not to, the point where the American people are going to start demanding some kind of change," he said. "You know, most middle-class people, which are the people who in the final analysis make the decisions—you just don't fuck with their kids. You saw what happened with drunk driving. Enough teen-agers got killed where you had Mothers Against Drunk Driving, and they changed the entire landscape. The focus of rage this time, Coale said, would be the N.R.A. "Whether they like it or not. They've taken a stand, and they're a target."

The N.R.A. felt the pressure at once. The day after the shooting, Heston and LaPierre announced that the full Denver meeting, with the planned gun shows and other special events, would be scaled down drastically. "People come to see the wares, see the goodies," one N.R.A. official explained. "That has been cancelled, because people in there, let's face it, would be having a good time, smiles on their faces, and there'd be guns around and it wouldn't look good on TV. I can see it now. Our P.R. people say we were all of a sudden getting requests for press credentials like never before when this happened yesterday. All that bottom-feeding." However, the Heston-LaPierre announcement said that the association's annual members' meeting would go ahead as planned, and that a reception featuring a speech by the conservative Oklahoma Congressman J. C. Watts, Jr., "will also remain scheduled." That week, local politicians in Denver called on Watts not to "pour salt on the wounds" of Littleton, and to withdraw from the event, which he did. Those who attended the members' meeting had to make their way through a crowd of some seven thousand protesters who were singing "We Shall Overcome."

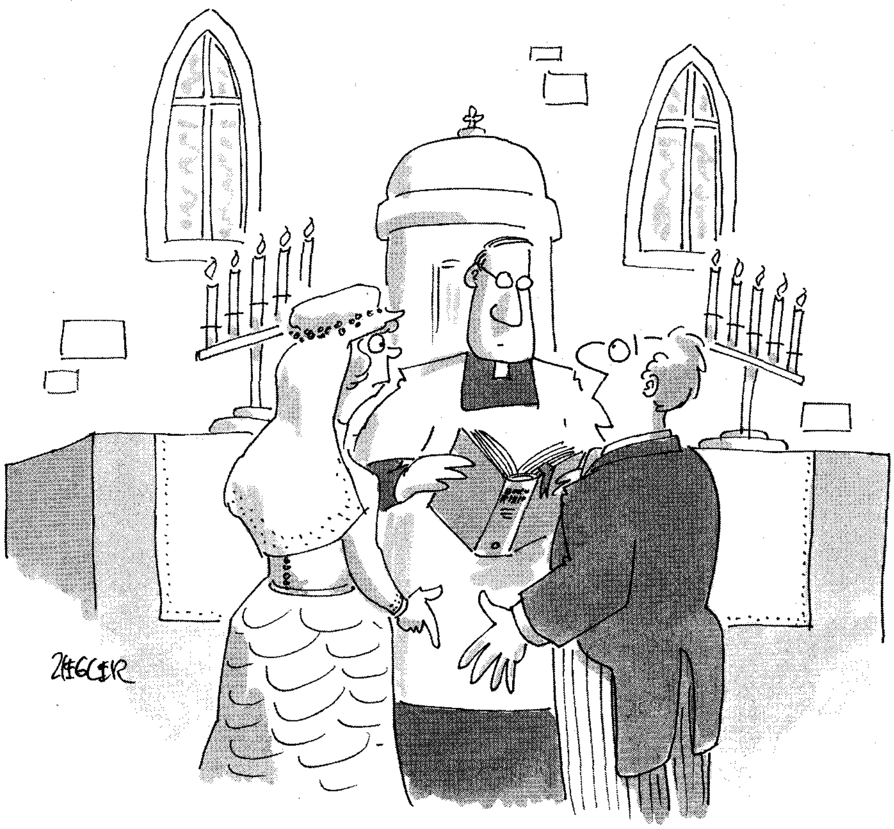
The N.R.A.'s legislative momentum vanished. Of the two N.R.A.-backed bills in Colorado that were about to become law, the N.R.A. official said, "I think it's safe to say that those are dead in the water, so to speak." The Florida bill criminalizing lawsuits against gunmakers was tabled, as were similar bills in other states. A California proposal limiting individuals to one gun purchase a month, which had been given little chance, was passed. The day the N.R.A.'s board meeting concluded, Heston told ABC's Cokie Roberts in an interview that he favored a proposal to require purchasers at gun shows to submit to a background check, as long as the Administration didn't mandate extensive record-keeping on them. Within the gun industry, some people were privately discussing what they could give up—closing the gun-show loophole in the Brady bill was a foregone conclusion, and a return of the waiting period began to seem likely.

John Coale figured that the moment of opportunity that Littleton afforded would not last forever. When I spoke to him after the killings, he said that he had talked to the White House that day, and he speculated that it might be a good time for the President to consider calling a summit on the gun-violence issue. "What the White House can do—and it's all they have to do—is provide a table somewhere. And that puts a lot of fear and majesty into the process."

Almost immediately, gossip about a possible White House summit made its way around Washington. On NBC's "Meet the Press," Senator Joseph Lieberman, Democrat of Connecticut, suggested a summit. That same day, Ricker, who had replaced Feldman as head of the A.S.S.C., wrote Lieberman a note saying that he thought a summit was a good idea, and that he would be glad to attend. On Friday of the week after the Littleton event, the President discussed the tragedy in a televised interview with NBC's Katie Couric, and called for a summit meeting to consider the issue of children and violence. Among those expected to attend the event were Ed Shultz and several of his fellow gun manufacturers. Heston and LaPierre, of the N.R.A., were not invited.

Coale believes that the moment he has been waiting for is at hand: an opportunity to move the gun industry away from the N.R.A. and toward the negotiating table. Much of the summit will be "Wizard of Oz stuff," he says. "You know, everybody comes and there's a lot of smoke and they get a certificate and go home. When the working part starts, that's where we'll come in." And that work, if Coale and his fellow ambulance chasers have their way, will lead the gun industry to a cash settlement or gun restrictions, or both—concessions that might never have been gained through legislation alone or in the courts. Coale and his colleagues are guiding the national agenda—a new means of public-policy making that can't be found in any civics book.

I once asked Coale what he and his allies could possibly offer the gun industry as incentive to negotiate. "Peace," he replied, with a beatific smile. "Back to business. Peace." ♦



"Till death do us part? Hey, I thought this was just supposed to be a starter marriage!"

ANNALS OF CHILDHOOD

MIRACLE KID

Max was born with deformities so severe that the hospital thought his parents might choose not to prolong his life. Instead, they fought to give him every chance.

BY LUCINDA FRANKS

My nephew Max emerged into the world on June 11, 1992: plump, pink, and with an abundance of fair silky hair. Right up to the moment of his birth, my sister Penelope had been relaxed, and laughing at the doctors' jokes. This was her second child, and sonograms had pictured a perfectly normal baby boy. But now, as the baby appeared, the room went quiet. The staff stood frozen, holding the baby up in the light, and didn't seem to hear Penelope when she asked what was wrong. A "Code Blue" announcement came over the loudspeaker, and Penelope thought that there must be a problem with another baby in another birthing room.

Then she heard the slap of paper booties on linoleum and the murmur of voices as white coats bobbed above her. "I don't know what this is, I just don't know," a doctor said plaintively as he put the baby into her arms. Beneath the lush head of hair, the baby's face was like a child's unfinished drawing. He had only one, unnaturally small eye, on the right side of his face. On the other side, there was a concave blankness beneath the brow. His nostrils were separated by a deep cleft, and his nasal ridge was squashed. Penelope took his curled fist and felt for fingers, but none were there. Her husband, Bernard, looked down at her, ashen-faced.

"Bernie, what did we do?" she said.

A doctor who had just arrived, with a leather jacket thrown over his hospital scrubs, began asking questions. Had she taken drugs during pregnancy? Alcohol? Ingested anything unusual? No, she said, unless you counted six chocolate croissants she'd eaten an hour before she went into labor.

The doctor asking these questions was John Graham, the head geneticist at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, in Los Angeles, and he had seen hundreds of birth defects; as he later told me, he knew that these were severe deformities. He studied the mother's face: fair skin, high cheekbones, Roman nose. Then the father's: tawnier skin and a flat, Slavic roundness. Were they related in any way? Dr. Graham knew that his only hope of saving the baby was to diagnose the syndrome; he left to consult his genetics library.

By this time, the nurses had whisked the baby away to the neonatal intensive-care unit for evaluation. Bernard went along, desperate to make himself useful. As the nurses hooked the baby up to heart and lung monitors and took X-rays, Bernard tried to count fingers and toes, unsure of how to classify the little stubs protruding from his son's hands and feet. Finally, with tears running down his cheeks, he shouted, "Five fingers and five toes! That's pretty good, huh?"

Penelope was suffering violent cramps, and the painkillers she had received during labor put her into a troubled sleep. For the past fifteen years, she had worked in theatre and film. Now she dreamed that she had left the water running in the bathroom of a theatre and couldn't stop the torrent that was washing over the audience.

She awoke to hear someone saying softly, "Low viability." Dr. Graham had returned from his office. "It was nothing you could have prevented," he told her gently. The baby had a very rare genetic disorder called Fraser syndrome, which interrupts the development of a fetus's organs and other body parts. The skin over the eyes often does not split to create eyelids, and the fingers and the toes usually do not separate. Anomalous recessive genes are part of everyone's genetic makeup, but they usually remain undetected for generations. If both parents turn out to have the same wild gene pair, the chances are one in four that they will produce a child with birth defects. The odds against this baby's conception, based on documented cases, Graham explained, were probably a million to one.

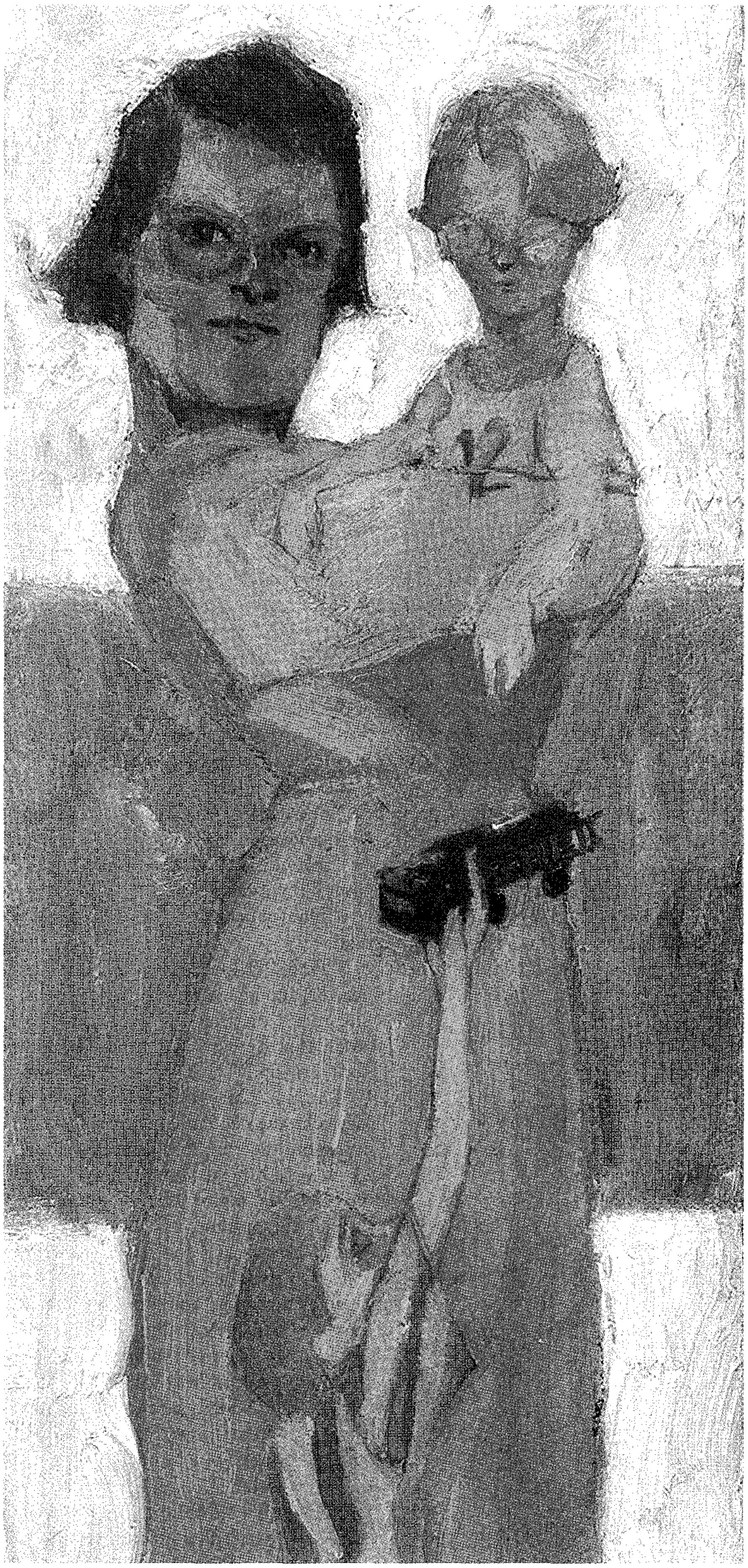
Eventually, testing revealed that, although the baby had only one kidney, most of his internal organs were intact. But he had severe hearing loss, and it was assumed that his single, underdeveloped eye could not function. Brain scans suggested that he had no corpus callosum, the nerve pathway between the left and the right side of the brain. Moreover, statistics showed that the outlook for children afflicted with Fraser syndrome was grim.

Over the next few hours, Penelope questioned every doctor she could find. If her baby made it through one night, what were the chances that he would live a second? A week? A month? A year? His childhood? What could be fixed? One frustrated genetics resident finally said, "I can't tell you. We've only seen these babies in a bottle."

Bernard sat on the hospital bed and wept. He was a logical man, good at mapping strategies: he had a small metals-manufacturing business, and had managed to make it flourish in a falling market. But now he had no plan. One nurse felt duty-bound to inform him that in some rural hospitals such babies might be left to die. "This is my son!" Bernard told her, yet he secretly wondered: should the baby survive—blind, deaf, mentally impaired?

Penelope sat beside the incubator, where the baby lay in a cocoon of tubes, needles, and wires, and tried to imagine him as a stranger would. She needed to see him through the eyes of the staff, some of whom took detours to avoid his incubator, and she wanted to understand the distress of one nurse, who had reportedly asked to be transferred from his case. Craniofacial deformities, more than any other birth defect, have been found

N. ASCENCIOS



"He changes everyone who meets him," says Penelope, with Max and his brother.

to profoundly alter the mother-child bonding process. Dr. Graham initially expected Penelope to reject the baby, but since childhood my sister had been a collector of the wounded and the halt. Hairless newborn rodents warmed under her desk lamp; lame puppies roamed our house. She immediately knew that this child was her destiny; she felt a magical confluence of souls.

At the end of the second day, as Penelope was sleepily holding the baby's hand through the incubator porthole, she felt his single, unblinking eye fixed on her. She called for Bernard, and asked him, "Do you see this? Something's rocketing off him, like he's saying, 'I'm in here. Who are you?' " At that moment, Penelope made a pact with God. "If he lives, I can make it through anything," she told Bernard. "But I can't make it through if we lose him—I just can't. We're going to beat this, and we're going to let them know it. Right, Bern?"

Bernard hesitated. He thought about the enormous emotional and financial costs of caring for this baby. They were not wealthy, and Penelope would have to give up her job. But he had always been powerless in the face of her enthusiasms. (She had been, over the years, not only an animal-rights activist but also a scholar of Buddhism and an ice-hockey player.) Suddenly, both he and Penelope remembered that Luke, their seven-year-old son, was still with the babysitter. While Bernard went to retrieve him, Penelope kept watch over the baby. Clusters of interns and residents came to look, and she heard some of them referring to him as "it." Finally, Penelope had had enough. "This 'it' is my son, and *he* wants to be left alone," she said.

Penelope persuaded a reluctant nurse to put the child to her breast, and he began to suck vigorously. The nurse said firmly, "It's only instinct. *Any* baby will nurse." Then she pointed out another nurse, who was unhooking a plump baby from a ventilator and rushing out the door with him. "That baby has been on life support for months," the first nurse said. "It has been unending agony for the mother, and she's decided to end it. She's waiting in a private room so the baby can die in her arms."

If the staff members at Cedars-Sinai were discouraging, it was because they feared that Penelope might have unrealistic hopes for the child. Doctors have identified hundreds of inherited malformation syndromes in the past three decades, but, even if they know what genes cause these deformities, there is no gene therapy to correct them. Formidable neonatal technology will sometimes save even the most compromised babies, but families can be bankrupted both emotionally and financially in the process, so hospitals have begun to exercise some discretion. "Our bioethics committee asks itself, 'Are we saving a life, or merely prolonging death?' " Graham later explained to me. "In this case, the neonatology division was unsure. Two fetuses with Fraser syndrome had been stillborn at the hospital, but we had never had a live birth." And, he confided, a baby had recently been born with a similar syndrome, Apert, and the parents apparently couldn't cope. "The baby was struggling to breathe," Graham said, "and after much soul-searching we decided to withhold help, and the infant died."

When I arrived from New York three days after the birth, Penny had grown tired of waiting for the hospital to make a decision about her baby, and she enlisted me in a campaign to convince the doctors that this was a whole child, who could see, hear, and feel, not just a jumble of damaged parts. She called in a Catholic priest, and he stood over the incubator with water and baptized the baby Max. She had already found an ally in the night nurse, who agreed that the baby had good muscle tone and was not flaccid and limp, like many neurologically impaired newborns. Together, Penelope and I squeezed squeak toys over the crib and conspicuously praised his responses.

My sister is six years younger than I, and our relationship has not always been a peaceful one. Sometimes we are intensely close. Then some dramatic bit of sibling rivalry—the spoiled, successful firstborn vs. the easily dismissed, often aggrieved second child—will drive us apart. In fact, we had barely spoken for four years when I got her call from the hospital. But I was amazed by Penelope's extraordinary determination to convince herself and everyone around her that to give Max anything less than immediate and complete treatment would be immoral, even a crime.

Late one afternoon, an ophthalmologist named Yaron S. Rabinowitz was sent in to confirm the diagnosis of blindness. He peered into Max's eye, then ran out and came back with magnifying lamps attached to his forehead. Finally, he turned and said, in a heavy South African accent, "The kiddie sees. This kiddie *sees!*"

Most Fraser-syndrome babies have cryptophthalmos: one or both of their underdeveloped eyes are buried beneath the skin. Max was lucky to have one eye, but without a lid the cornea would soon dry up. Penelope and I began to quiz Dr. Rabinowitz about whether it was possible to reconstruct a lid. He explained that tissue was fused to the cornea, and it would be risky to separate it; the baby's chances of going blind on the operating table were eighty per cent. Without the operation, we argued, his chances increased to a hundred per cent.

Good news began to trickle in. On June 15th, brain scans revealed that Max did in fact have the nerve pathway that connects the two sides of the brain. The next day, doctors upgraded his chances for survival, and decided to surgically repair his intestinal tract. Another hearing test revealed that Max could discern speaking voices.

During that first week, I became troubled by Max's raspy breathing and alerted a resident, who wearily replied that this would be put on the list of irregularities to check. The next day, a pediatric ear, nose, and throat specialist, Eugene Flaum, examined Max's larynx and trachea, and saw that the upper part of his airway was no wider than a swizzle stick—in a normal newborn, it would be four times that size. According to Penelope, Flaum explained that because he was not Max's doctor he would make a recommendation to the hospital's bioethics committee.

"And if you were his doctor?" Bernard asked.

"I would put a tracheostomy in right away," Flaum replied.

"Then you're our doctor," Bernard said.

"That's all I needed to hear," Flaum replied, and he marched into the operating room. At that moment, Penelope knew that Bernard had joined the fight for their son.

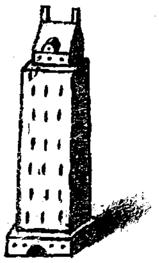
On June 22nd, when Max was eleven days old, the neonatology division called a sombre meeting to discuss his future. A hospital official began by saying that no one could blame a family for exploring all the options, and he mentioned group homes and long-term-care facilities. Penelope bristled, but Bernard hushed her and hauled out a sheaf of notes he had made about Fraser syndrome. Not satisfied with the one-page entry in a standard medical text the hospital had provided, he noted its flaws. He pointed out, for example, that of the approximately one hundred cases of Fraser syndrome documented in the report forty-five of the infants had been stillborn or had died in the first year of life—with most deaths occurring within the first week. The chance of mental deficiency for a Fraser child was put at eighty per cent—but that figure was based on data from only twenty-one children. “What kind of a statistic is that?” he now asked the members of the neonatology division. “What about the intelligence of the twenty-four other babies who survived?” Eventually, he and Penelope tracked down several other Fraser-syndrome children, from Louisiana to Germany, and learned that all of them were of normal intelligence.

Penelope jumped in. “We do not intend to warehouse our son,” she said icily. “There’s only one option we’d like to discuss, and that is aggressive medical intervention.”

By late June, Max’s eye had become dry and ulcerated. Rabinowitz had been researching and plotting out an experimental operation, but he was pessimistic about it. Nevertheless, on June 28th, he and Norman Shorr, an ophthalmic plastic surgeon who works for both Cedars-Sinai and the U.C.L.A. medical center, performed the first of two procedures to free the eye and create a protective top lid. To the soothing tones of a Mozart sonata, Rabinowitz trained a high-powered microscope on Max’s eye, took a razor-sharp instrument, and began to peel away skin and tissue fused to the top portion of the cornea. Using tiny forceps, he removed layer after layer, each thinner than onionskin, while trying to avoid perforating the cornea. “In the middle of the operation, I stopped, thinking I had gone too deep,” recalls Rabinowitz, who knew that any puncture could destroy the eyeball. After many hours, he and Shorr finally exposed the cornea without damaging it. “Gee, it looks like this little eye’s going to make it,” Rabinowitz said. Now they needed to construct an upper and a lower lid, using tissue and membrane harvested from inside Max’s mouth. This, too, was laborious and innovative work. When Rabinowitz came out to tell the family that the procedure had been successful, they feared the worst, for he appeared dour and stooped: hunching over Max so tensely for nine hours had hurt his back.

Meanwhile, Dr. Graham had come up with his own innovation, to deal with Max’s partially incomplete skull: a polypropylene helmet, which, as Max grew into it, would insure that he would not develop a lopsided head. He would have to wear the helmet all the time, and be fitted for a larger one after six weeks.

On July 4th, Max was discharged. Bernard had convinced the insurance company that home care would be more economical, and their white stucco house, in the hills east of Los Angeles, had been made ready. It was small, with two bedrooms and one bath, so the dining room had been furnished with a crib and with shelves of medical supplies. Luke was waiting at the door.



“Wow!” he said when he saw his new brother’s helmet, his bandaged eye, and the metal tube from the tracheostomy in his neck. “He looks like a Power Ranger.”

Along with Max came enough machines to outfit a spaceship: a generator, with a loud industrial whirr; a suction machine to clean out the fluids in Max’s trachea; a big humidifier; and an apnea monitor that regularly emitted high-pitched beeps. In time, Luke got to work the machines, to clean them, and to change the cannula, a little tube that fitted inside the larger tracheostomy tube to catch mucus clots. If Max started to choke, Luke would just pull out the silver cannula, leaving an open passageway for air to come in. Then the cannula was sterilized and reinserted.

At first, Penelope was in a permanent state of anxiety; the doctors had warned her that anything could happen. “Nobody knew—they don’t know to this day—why he was doing so well,” she told me. “I had this sense that some minor thing, letting his head fall back, feeding him too fast—anything or nothing—would cause his body to just implode.” She bought emergency breathing equipment and stocked the house with extra cannulas, at two hundred dollars apiece, so that there would always be one in easy reach.

Penelope avoided despair by focussing completely on Max’s treatment. She consulted specialists for every part of his anatomy, it seemed, and took him to two or three appointments a day, drafting Luke to help lug the heavy equipment. A steady stream of nurses, vision and hearing experts, technicians to service the machines, and special-needs counsellors paraded through the house, so that Bernard was forced to race from bedroom to bathroom in the morning, and was never sure whom he would run into. Those first few months, he felt invaded, ignored, and scared, and he would flee to the office early every morning.

The original day nurse was fired after Lulu, the babysitter, caught her washing Max’s bottles in dirty dishwater. “What’s the difference? He’s going to be a vegetable,” the nurse had said with a shrug. For a while, the family worked in shifts to complete all the daily chores of Max’s care: changing surgical dressings, administering antibiotics and ointments. Every two hours, someone had to put on surgical gloves, thread sterile tubing into the tracheostomy, and suction it out. Penny was sometimes frazzled and short-tempered. Max’s hair would smell from the helmet, and occasionally, in frustration, she would take it off. Finally, three excellent nurses were found, who lightened the atmosphere in the house by tending to Max with crisp, good-natured efficiency.

One day, Penelope noticed Max raising his eye toward the light. But the eye was still covered with a patch and was stitched shut from the first surgery. She had read that kittens whose eyelids don’t open during infancy become blind. She began calling Rabinowitz regularly, pressing him to do the second operation before it was too late. “She was right—we were cutting it close,” Rabinowitz recalls. “But we couldn’t risk dividing the lid before it had completely healed.”

After three weeks, Max was wheeled into surgery and the bandages on his eye were removed. Rabinowitz and Shorr found that the sutured lid had knitted well and the cornea was clear. Now, in a six-hour operation, they divided the lower lid, which had been stretched upward, and used its upper half to give Max a top lid. The new upper lid had no muscles, so he would never be able to close his eye completely, but it provided enough of a canopy to protect his vision.

For the next week, Penelope kept passing colorful objects in front of Max’s eye, but got no reaction. Then, one day, Luke took out his baseball glove and idly began throwing a tennis ball into the air. Max, propped in a baby carrier, started shaking his rattle and hissing through his tracheostomy tube—the only sound he could make. Luke saw that Max’s eye was following the ball up and down. From then on, Max began tracking people, studying his hands, and bringing his eye up close to a picture of his brother that was taped to the rails of his crib. He was taken to the medical center for new tests, but, to the family's disappointment, the vision in his single eye registered a dismal 20/400—legally blind.

The street that Penelope and Bernard had lived on for more than five years was filled with young families, yet few visited immediately after Max was born. One kind gesture came from the neighborhood children: they signed their names to a poster that read "Welcome Max" and slipped it under the front door. To most neighbors, Max was just a tiny bundle in a white helmet, which they saw being carried from the car to the door. "Aren't you tired of being the new tragedy instead of the new baby?" one of the nurses finally asked. "You know, before Max is able to defend himself, how you treat and feel about him is what others will feel, too," she said. "Let people know he's here to stay, he's waiting to join the world."

Penelope bought Max a new red, yellow, and blue outfit, and took him to a neighborhood block party. The neighbors crowded around in celebration, and Penelope began to feel relaxed, almost happy. Perhaps, she thought, she could even join one of those "baby and me" classes. One woman came over and complimented her on Max's cute clothes, adding that it was good she would dress him up anyway. Penny asked what she meant by "anyway." The woman replied, "Well, you know . . . you know." Penny's cheeks began to burn. After a moment, she handed Max to Bernard and went inside. "I'm kidding myself," she told the nurse tearfully. "We'll never fit in."

Penny was brash and outspoken with Max's powerful doctors, but she began to shrink from the reactions of strangers. She had smoked-glass visors made for Max's helmets, and when the helmets finally came off, at sixteen months, she bought him hats with big brims. In an elevator once, a woman asked playfully, "Who's that behind that hat? Doesn't he have a face?" Finally, the woman flipped up the hat. As she gasped and shrank back, Penny just stared at her.

Bernard had a different attitude. He left the hats at home, and proudly carried Max on his shoulders. "Max just continually amazed me," Bernard said. "He was regularly dragged to the hospital, cut and sewed, and within a few hours of surgery he would be raring to go." Bernard tried to help Penelope cope with the behavior of strangers which so infuriated her. On one occasion, at the Price Club, he noticed a woman watching Max. "This is how you handle these things," he said to Penelope, and walked over to the woman. "Hi, I noticed you were staring at my son," he told her. "Would you like to meet him?" After Bernard had explained Max's syndrome to her, the woman thanked him enthusiastically.

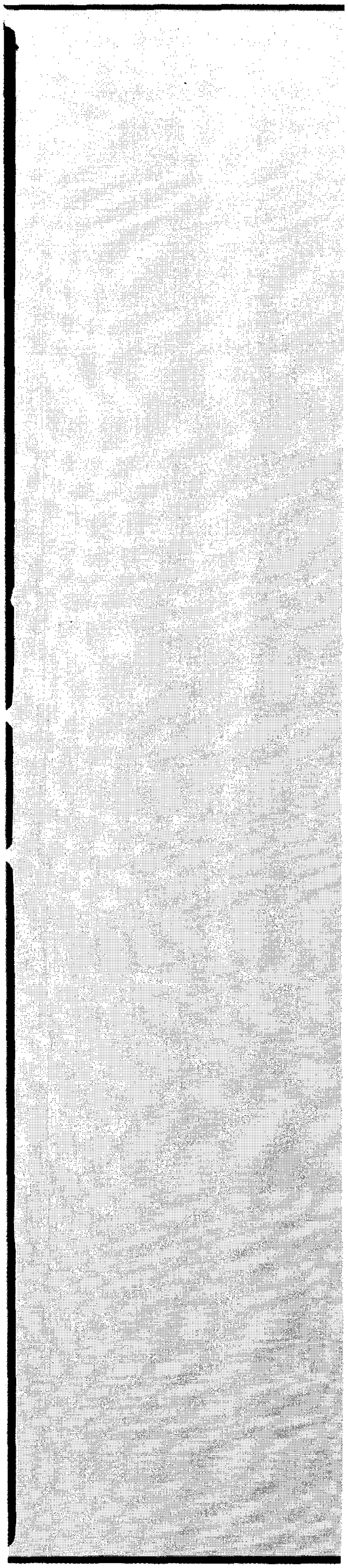
"People are just curious," Bernard told Penelope. "They want to understand."

"I don't give a flying fuck what they want," said Penelope. She knew her own reactions were sometimes extreme, but she didn't like being patronized.

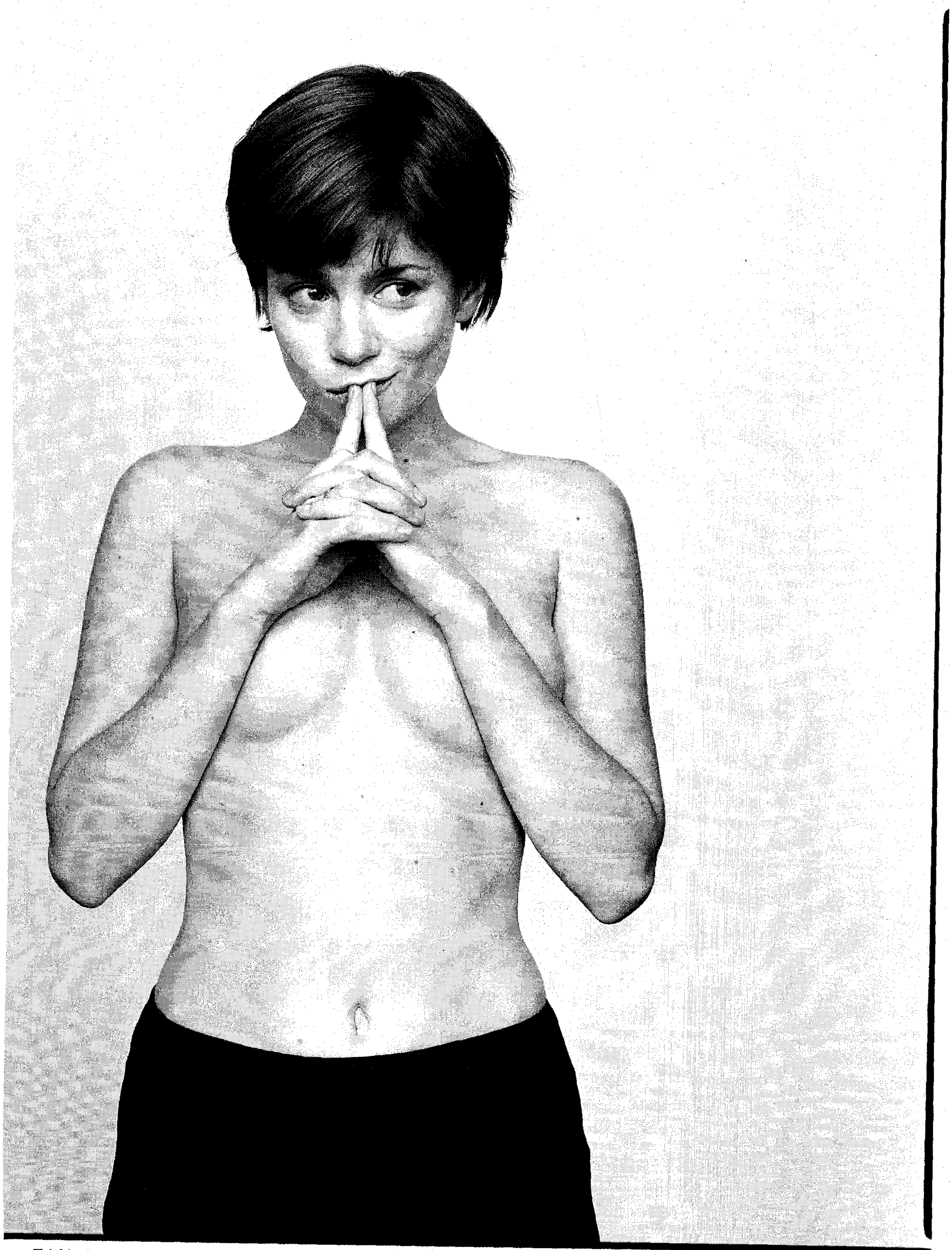
Though Penelope and Bernard frequently clashed over the challenges of raising Max, his birth had brought them closer together after a period of estrangement. "You know that intense bond men have in war? Well, that's what happened to us," Penelope told me. "It was so huge, when you see doctors freaking out, when everything hinges on one little detail of timing, all the petty bullshit evaporates. Then, after each little unexpected victory, you look at each other and think, I got to see your best, I got to see deep inside you. You develop this profound respect for each other." I knew what she meant, because my relationship with Penelope had changed, too. Before Max's arrival, I was the star in our family, and Penelope refused to compete with me. Now there is no question who the real hero is.

IN February, when Max was eight months old, Dr. Myles Cohen, of Cedars-Sinai, performed the first surgery to separate his fingers. First, he put tourniquets on Max's arms to prevent bleeding. Then, taking care not to cut the arteries and nerves crucial to touch, movement, and sensation, he freed Max's thumb and separated the first two fingers from the second two. Skin grafts taken from Max's groin were sutured onto the newly exposed surfaces, and his forearms were encased in bulky plaster casts. When they came off, Max delighted in his ability to pick up and hide various objects, such as his helmet and his mother's glasses. The screen door banged regularly as neighborhood children came through to measure his progress. They regarded Max as their special secret, and they loved teaching him tricks.

One day, Penelope saw Luke making



LOVE'S LABORS *The British actres*
courtship; she also plays an inconstant love



na Friel is the lap dancer in Patrick Marber's Broadway drama "Closer," and she seems particularly at home with his dark, tag-team view of modern the new film version of "A Midsummer Night's Dream"—a far merrier depiction of love's convolutions. Photograph by Brigitte Lacombe.

his own chocolate milk—three parts chocolate, one part milk. "I don't think I really noticed until then how much he had changed," she told me. "He had been a typical firstborn, a Caesar accustomed to the instant gratification of his wishes, and almost overnight he had lost his staff, his audience, his whole kingdom. He was just a kid who had to run his own life." Luke had been a colicky baby, and a very thin-skinned, jumpy toddler, who hated to be touched. Yet now he would calmly hold and stroke his brother. "He understood we were in a life-and-death situation, and he became very calm, particularly when I got excited," Penelope said. "Once, when we were replacing the surgical ties on the tracheostomy, Max coughed, and the whole tube popped out. I was fumbling and screaming, and of course Bernard just stood there, being a man. Then we heard Luke's voice in the next room, calmly asking the emergency operator what he should do."

When Max turned one, Dr. Flaum was still concerned about his airway, and insisted that the tracheostomy tube remain in place. Penelope grew frustrated as she watched Max strain to communicate, and she worried that he would miss the opportunity to learn to speak. She decided to master sign language, and enrolled Bernard, Luke, and Lulu in signing school, too.

It was now clear that Max was not retarded. Using the three fingers that had been freed on each hand, he quickly picked up twelve basic word signs. As long as the tracheostomy tube was in place, no one expected him to talk, though one of his nurses had taught him to emit little sounds through his lips by gently blowing and cooing at him. So when Max one day pointed at a lamp and said, "Ike!" Penelope and Bernard didn't react at first. They just looked at him blankly. Max, who was sitting on Bernard's lap, tried again. He pointed to another lamp, and then to the glow of the television set, and said, "Ike, ike, ike!"

" 'Light,' " Bernard said, getting up so fast he nearly dropped Max. "My God, he's saying 'light'!"

The sounds that Max uttered were approximations, made in the back of his mouth. Thus he said "Uke" for "Luke" and "Gaa-ee" for "Daddy." He could never muster the air to form an "m" sound for "Mama." But he loved to talk, and the neighborhood children competed to see whose name he would learn first.

At ten months, Max had had an ultrasound test to check his single kidney. When the technician had almost completed the scan, Penny pointed to a shadow on the right side of the screen. The technician moved the probe closer to the shadow, then went to get the doctor, leaving Penelope to pray that the dark spot was not a tumor. When the doctor examined the scan, he announced that Max had a second kidney, and further tests found it to be partially functional. It had been missed at birth because it was situated in the middle of the abdomen, where embryonic kidneys begin, rather than lower in the torso.

Also at ten months, Max started walking—six months earlier than his brother had. Penny pushed the furniture to the walls, afraid that Max would bump into things. But he didn't. In fact, he would toddle right through the center of a doorway. Later, he rode a tricycle down the center of the sidewalk—a remarkable feat for a one-eyed child.

By late summer, Max's new upper lid had begun to adhere to his cornea. Surgery was done again, and this time Rabinowitz and Shorr sewed little slices of silicon sponge onto the lid to keep it from sticking. But they were cautious about the long-term results.

In September of 1993, Max underwent surgery to widen his airway. In the embryo, the windpipe begins as a solid cartilage tube, which later hollows out, but Fraser syndrome had interrupted that process. Dr. Flaum took a piece of rib from Max's rib cage, cut open the front part of the trachea and the area near the larynx, then fitted the piece of rib into the cut to widen the opening.

Throughout the second year of his life, Max had surgical procedures every few weeks. Eventually, his medical bills totalled more than half a million dollars, almost all of which was paid by health insurance. Doctors repaired an umbilical hernia, created a new navel, and separated his remaining fingers. Every month or so, Max would have a laryngoscopy-and-bronchoscopy examination. Eight months after his second eye reconstruction, a third was done, because the lids were once again beginning to adhere to the cornea and blood vessels were encroaching on the cornea. He also had a series of operations to correct urological malformations.

In a way, Max's surgeries became a reassuring routine. All children crave rituals, and his involved a mask and gown, and treats conferred by special friends. Each time he took the distressing ride down the corridor to the O.R., he would hold his mother's fingers through the bars of the gurney until the swinging doors pulled mother and child apart. Then, when he emerged from anesthesia, Penelope would be standing at the end of the bed holding balloons or a toy, and Max would gurgle with pleasure. Within days, he would be running after Luke or begging Bernard to swing him around and toss him on the couch.

Max plunged enthusiastically into the terrible twos. If Penelope told him to stop playing the bongo drum, for example, he would simply bang louder, leaving her to wonder whether his hearing had deteriorated or he was just being stubborn. Discipline was tricky with a child who could show his displeasure by throwing up and possibly choking to death. Usually, he got his way. He would stand in the shopping cart and scream "Wan daa!" whenever he spotted a toy fire truck or police car. Back at home, he would put on a fire hat and race his engines across the rug, calling "Put it out! Put it out!" He ate only tortillas and cheese, and drank only ice water. He refused to sleep anywhere but in Bernard's green leather easy chair. When he made mischief, it was hard to know whether or not he'd done it on purpose. One Sunday night, while Penelope was heating a can of SpaghettiOs, there was a knock on the front door. She had on short pajamas, the rugs were strewn with popcorn, and Bernard was away, so she opened the door only a crack—and saw a police officer. "Are you all right?" he asked. Behind him, four members of the L.A.P.D. crouched with guns ready.

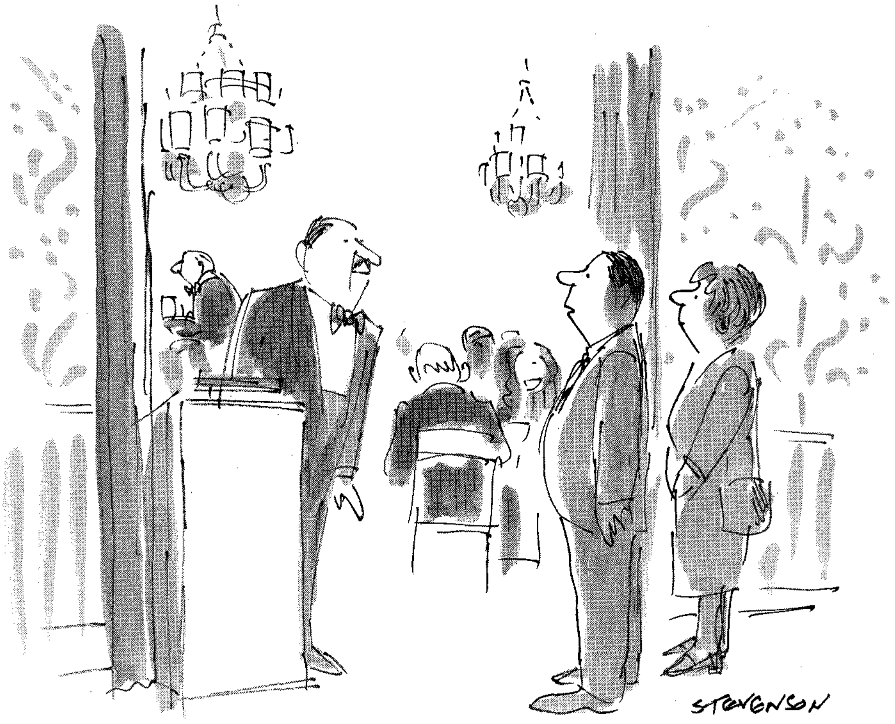
"We have a report of a hostage situation here," the officer explained. Max had called 911, and the operator, hearing his raspy breathing, had asked, "Are you being held? Are you a hostage?" Max had replied with a grunt.

THE Tripod educational program, in nearby Burbank, teaches deaf and hard-of-hearing children alongside their hearing peers, and it agreed to admit Max despite his other disabilities. Although Max registered a fifty-five-to-sixty-five-decibel hearing loss on tests, he seemed to understand people when they spoke loudly. Dr. Flaum thought that Max had perhaps learned to read lips and found other ways of picking up sound. "Beethoven could hear and write music when he was deafer than Max," Flaum said. "Perhaps he felt the music, and perhaps Max does, too."

Developmental therapists didn't really know how much Max could hear, or see, and they couldn't explain why he made such steady progress even with the constant interruptions of his surgeries. By age three, he was on target in every area except his speech, which was broken, faint, and lacking in consonants. Flaum kept postponing removal of the tracheostomy tube, though, because the airway was still too narrow. Flaum had become Penelope's anchor at Cedars-Sinai, and their relationship was unusually friendly. She teased him for being so stern that he scared the nurses; he chided her for badgering the doctors. Now, however, they were locked in a battle of wills.

Max had virtually stopped signing, because he wanted to be like the hearing children in his Tripod class, even though they didn't always understand his speech. His teachers insisted that Max communicate with the deaf children, too, but Max was adamant, and Penelope feared that he would fall into a crevice between two worlds.

Finally, when Max was three and a half, Flaum pronounced the airway adequate and scheduled a procedure to remove the tracheostomy tube. Penelope was waiting in the recovery room when Max was wheeled out from the operation, and she saw at once that he still had the tube in his throat. When Flaum's eyes met hers, she recalls, he said, "Don't go off the deep end, now. I can take this out, but, you know, I wanted to check with you. It wouldn't hurt if we left it in awhile longer."



"A table in Siberia, please."

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Penny remembers that at that moment all her anger at him melted. "I had the strangest sensation that we needed to switch roles for a minute," she told me. "He had gone the whole distance with Max, and it was hard for him to let go. I heard myself saying, 'It's O.K., Gene, it really is. We can do this.' Then he nodded, and very, very gingerly he took the tube out and plugged the hole."

Max loved the sensation of taking in gulps of air and forming sounds. After several weeks, he began talking nonstop, and his long vowels made him sound like a slightly hoarse Southern gentleman. He was also far more mobile without his suctioning equipment. Lulu began to take him on errands, and once, when he saw a boy in a wheelchair, she had to explain to him that the boy was disabled. Max certainly didn't think of himself that way. When he met another Fraser-syndrome child—one of four whom his parents were in contact with—he was bewildered to see that she had no eyes. But he seemed comfortable with the fact that he had only one. At the beach once, he was rubbing beneath his left brow, and Bernard's mother, Ethel, instinctively told him he would get sand in his eye. He laughed and said, "Grandma, there is no eye there."

As it turns out, though, there is. Buried under the skin is a fetal eye the size of an undilated pupil which had stopped developing at eleven weeks. Penelope and Lulu are convinced that the eye can perceive light, but Rabinowitz says that this is very difficult to verify. He does believe, however, that someday a microchip could be implanted and connected to the optic nerves. Luke likes the idea that his brother could have a bionic eye.

When Max became settled in school, Penelope decided to return to work. "I needed the rest—I couldn't sit through one more surgery," she said. She went back to her job in television and film production, and found that Max had changed her profoundly. "I was tougher, calmer, more focussed and analytical," she said. "When you are doing battle every day, you have to keep your head." At first, Bernard took over surgery duty with enthusiasm. But, after four operations, Penelope saw that he was exhausted. The next stage of reconstruction for Max was to fix his nose and eye

"I may be a jackal-headed god of the underworld, Janet, but I'm also your lawyer."

• •

socket, and sculpt his face. "Let's keep him the way he is, Dad," Luke advised. "He's cool. And some of these things could be useful. His webbed toes will make great fins when he learns to swim."

Bernard agreed that more than fifty-five surgical procedures in five years was enough—that Max needed time to enjoy his childhood. The helmets had succeeded in rounding his head, natural growth had lengthened his jaw, and Coke-bottle glasses obscured the fact that his left eye socket was empty. With the tracheostomy tube, Max's lips had often been fixed in an uncomprehending "O," but now he could smile freely. People didn't shrink from him anymore; they reached out to him. Penny had even put the hats away.

Once in kindergarten, Max made remarkable progress, though his deaf teachers still had to nag him to sign. He would sometimes grow frustrated with his stiff, clumsy fingers, which could not make more intricate sign-language movements, or even grasp a pencil firmly. Despite his best efforts, his handwriting remained shaky. But he rapidly learned to read, using books with large type.

Still, Penelope was anxious when his teachers declared that Max was ready to move on to first grade, and a more mainstream school environment. "Already, his glasses had been broken twice on the playground," she said. "What would happen when he was with older kids? Who could keep him from being teased and hurt?" She worried, too, because Max's social skills had not caught up with his academic achievements. If he wanted to roughhouse, he would simply tackle another child without preliminaries. Or he would barrage classmates with annoying, persistent questions, even when he knew the answers. The Tripod staff assured her, however, that Max would soon become bored if he didn't move on to a regular first grade. "He is so very, very bright that had he full use of his senses he would be labelled a gifted child," said Dr. Anne Galloway, a vision specialist for the Burbank school system, who works with Max. "The tests show that he sees, hears, and even feels tactilely only half of what his intellectual equals do, but his brain fills in the gaps. He is right up at their level, and rising fast."

So the teachers began to drill Max on the social niceties—how to make small talk, to wait his turn, to share, to reach out to others with the offer of a toy, a game, or a little joke. Because he would be going into a special Tripod first-grade classroom, with deaf, hearing-impaired, and hearing children, Max had to master these skills in two languages.

That summer, Max joined a children's hockey clinic. The coaches were taskmasters, and treated Max like any other child, making him drop to the ice and do pushups. Somehow, Max was able to move the puck across the ice and hit it into the goal, and Penelope entertained visions of his becoming the first deaf-and-blind hockey player.

LAST fall, almost three months after his sixth birthday, Max reported to George Washington Elementary School, in Burbank, for first grade. He had a new wedge haircut and big blue wire-rimmed glasses, which he had chosen himself, and he wore the school uniform of blue shorts, a white polo shirt, and a monogrammed red sweatshirt. In his backpack were his eyedrops, a reading book, a work folder, and his lunch money. Hundreds of children jostled about in the hallways. Loud bells rang, and Max didn't know what they meant. Twice during the day, he had to negotiate several sets of stairs so that the nurse could put drops in his eye. On one of these trips, Dr. Galloway discovered him pressed against a wall, waiting for a stampede of sixth graders to pass. "So, Max, how do you like your new school?" she asked. He sighed dramatically: "It's an absolute nightmare."

Once he was back in the classroom, though, with his hands folded on his desk, Max "looked for all the world like a professional first grader," Galloway recalled. But Max had been allowed to live without many rules, and at first he rebelled. When something interesting happened in the back of the room, he would turn his chair around in order to see it—and there he would stay. "He is so stubborn, he put up a valiant fight against school discipline," Galloway said. "But when he finally learned how to be one of many, that allowed him to move forward."

The Tripod teachers at Washington Elementary were determined to minimize the special treatment extended to Max. "People at this school care deeply about Max, and some wanted to pamper him—give him less work, and computers to spell for him, and lots of paraphernalia—but the teachers had expectations for Max," Galloway said. "We all knew this was a make-or-break six months for him, and they made him work." Max had only three crutches—an extra-fat pencil, materials with large print, and permission to go up to the blackboard when he couldn't see the writing.

Max now prints legibly within the lines

and keeps up with his peers. Though he is taken out of class once a week for mobility therapy, "you would not pick him out of a line as acting, or even looking, much different from anyone else," Galloway said. "The biggest difference I see is his mind. It has an unusual passion and persistence, and a conceptual beauty. His class studied penguins, and afterward Max saw penguin attributes everywhere." Each night, he has to read a book, do math and language drills, and work on memorizing a poem to recite in class that week.

An aide is supposed to spot him on the playground, but Max usually manages to dash off without her. He seeks out and is accepted by the most popular kids, because, as one teacher said, "that is the way he sees himself." He has learned also how to deal with other children's first reaction to him. If they ask, for example, why he has only one eye, he will answer, "That's just the way it is," impatient to move on to more important things, like soccer or kickball.

For years, Max was obsessed with Thomas the Tank Engine. Lately, it has been the comic-book hero Spider-Man, whose face is a blank red-and-black mask with eyeholes. Last Halloween, Max and his best friend wore Spider-Man hoods, thereby cutting down on some of the confused and unkind reactions that Penelope had got in previous years when strangers saw Max in costume.

In February, the family celebrated the loss of Max's first tooth. Penelope put it in a satin ring box under his pillow. Dental X-rays showed that Max's permanent front teeth will come in normally, but they may have no roots. Just for a moment, "I began to feel sorry for myself, you know, thinking most moms take their kids to the dentist hoping for no cavities and here I am hoping for just teeth," Penelope told me.

Everyone who knows Penelope has noticed that she has become both steadier and more lighthearted than she was. "The truth is that Max has made me more deeply happy than I have ever been," she explained. "He changes everyone who meets him. He changes their ideas about beauty, about worth. He has made every member of our family—immediate as well as extended—grow up and change their life view in some essential way."

Max has also changed a lot of people at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. "We think everyone has to be perfect, physically, mentally," Dr. Flaum said. "It's easy to write people off, say, 'This one's so abnormal, forget it.' Max has reaffirmed that you cannot look at a person and know for sure that he has no ability to learn and be a good member of our society." Many of the protocols devised to help Max have become standard at the hospital. Dr. Rabinowitz considers the operations to reconstruct Max's single eye to be some of his most successful innovations. He and his colleagues have published the results in the *American Journal of Ophthalmology*. Rabinowitz has set up a research foundation for birth defects of the eye, is trying to restore the fetal eyes of two other Fraser-syndrome children, and has plans to help several others. "It is a remarkable story," he said as he played a videotape of one of Max's operations in his office at the hospital. "The odds were so much against that eye. His vision is far better than I ever expected. He sees things that the optical tests can't confirm that he does."

When I visited Max last year, we went after school to the hockey rink to watch Luke practice with his team, the Bay City Bombers. Luke has become one of the team's top players, and Max is his biggest cheerleader. I bought Max a sugar doughnut, and we went to sit in the bleachers. He proudly read a picture book about firemen, but then pointed out with irritation that stripes on the firemen's coats were white. In his quest to make a blurry world distinct, he demands truth in detail, and he knows that the stripes should be yellow.

He asked why the sugar stuck to his face, why I didn't like doughnuts, and why I was there. "Because I'm your aunt," I said. To which he replied, "Why are you my aunt?" He wanted to know where I was born, and when I asked him the same question he said, "In a hospital. It was very scary. I wanted to get out. There was this machine, and they put a balloon in my mouth. I counted two, three, four, five. Do you dream, Cindy? I dream a violin got put in my mouth and somebody plays it with that stick. Then ghosts come, and they're not friendly like on TV. They put Lukey in the garbage."

Just then, Luke came out onto the ice, and Max leaned over the rail shouting, "Go, Lukey, go!" in a husky voice that seemed to come from a megaphone. I became aware of people staring at us and practiced how I would react if someone approached. A boy somewhere behind us kept asking his mother what was wrong with Max. Then I could tell by the trembling of the bleachers that they were coming down. Before I could whisk my nephew away, the woman was kneeling beside him. "It's a privilege to meet you, Max," she said, smiling. "We can see that God made you very special.

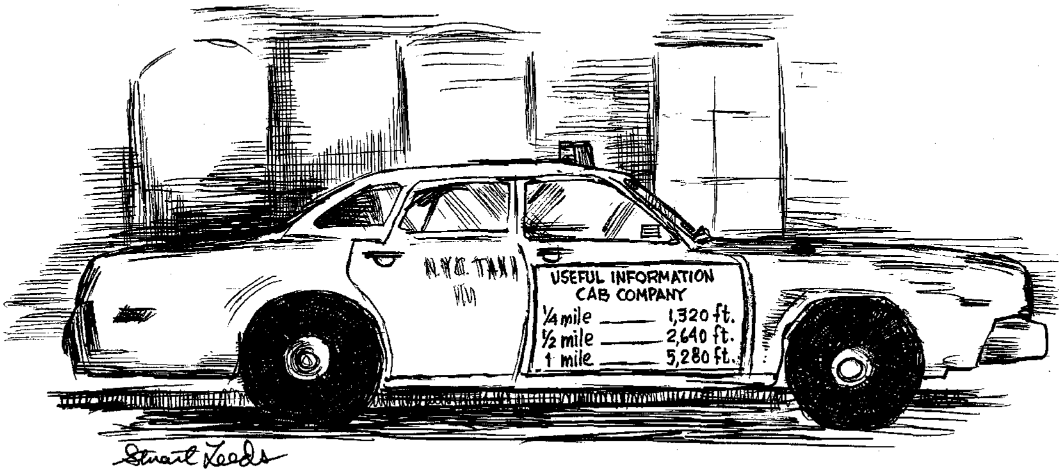
"Were you in a bad fire?" her son asked.

"What?" Max squinted up at him, and the boy, looking worried, repeated the question.

"Do you want to come to my house and play?" Max replied. The boy looked doubtful. "Do you like fire trucks?" To this, the boy nodded. "I have eleven—I have twelve fire engines."

"Do they have sirens?"

"They have sirens. They have bells," Max said excitedly. "And I have a real fire coat with yellow stripes." ♦

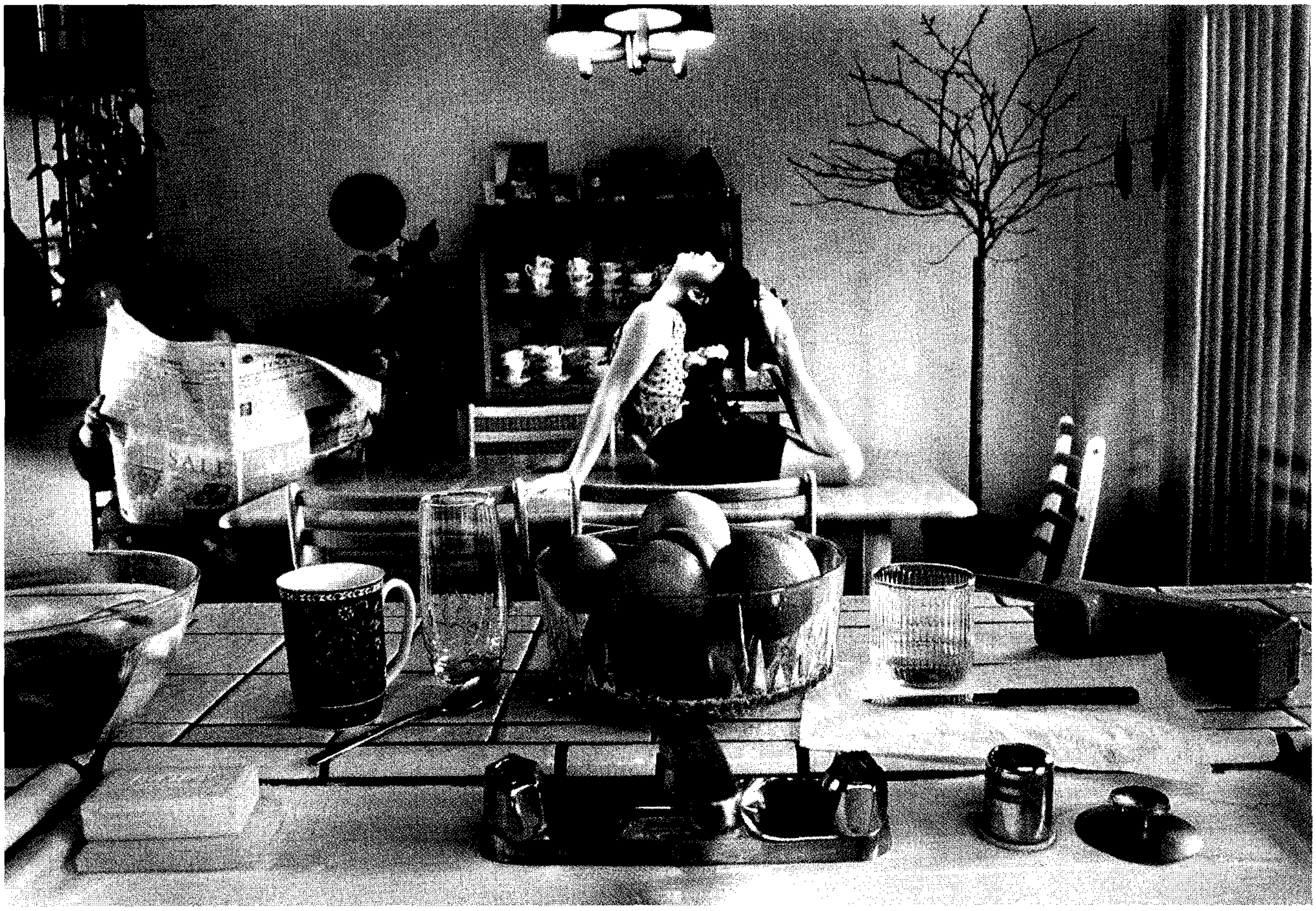


FICTION

HOW WAS IT, REALLY?

Theirs was the last divorce of all.

BY JOHN UPDIKE



BETH YARNELLE EDWARDS, "NOVATO, NO. 1" (1995)

INCREASINGLY, Ed Franklin had trouble remembering how it had actually been in the broad middle stretch of his life when he was living with his first wife and helping her, however distractedly, raise their children. His second marriage, which had once seemed so shiny and amazing and new, now was as old as his first had been—twenty-two years, exactly—when he had, one ghastly weekend, left it. His second wife, Vanessa, and he lived in a house much too big for them yet so full of souvenirs and fragile inherited treasures that they could not imagine living elsewhere. In their present circle of friends, the main gossip was of health and death, whereas once the telephone wires had buzzed with word of affairs and divorces. His present wife would set down the telephone to announce that Herbie Edgerton's cancer had come back and appeared to be into his lymph nodes and bones now; thirty years ago, his first wife, Alissa, would hang up and ask him if they were free for drinks and take-out pizza at the Bradleys' this Saturday. Yes, she would go on, it was such short notice that it would have been rude from anybody but the Bradleys. They were socially voracious, now that psychotherapy had helped them to see that they couldn't stand each other. Everybody's mental and marital health, Ed remembered, was frail, so frail that women, meeting, would follow their "How are you? with "No, how are you really?"

And then—this with an averted glance and the hint of a blush from Alissa—she had seen Wendy Martin in the superette and impulsively asked her and Jim to drinks tomorrow evening. She had said yes, they'd love to, but they couldn't stay more than a minute, Jim had the Planning Commission meeting, they were fending off this evil out-of-state developer who wanted to turn the entire old Crossman estate into Swiss-chaletstyle condos. Just paraphrasing Jim's flighty wife made Alissa glow. This at least was vivid in Ed's memory, the way her eyes would become bluer and her cheeks, a bit sallow normally, pink, and her lips, usually pursed and pensive, would dance into remarks and laughter when Jim was near or in prospect. He couldn't blame her; he had been as bad as she, looking outside the home for strength to keep the home going. The formula had worked only up to a point—perhaps the point, somewhere in their forties, when they realized that life wasn't endless. They had been, actually, among the last in their old set to get divorced; they had stayed on the sinking ship while its deck tilted and its mast splintered and its sails flapped, whipping loose line everywhere.

A teetotaller now (weight, liver, conflicting pills), Ed could remember the drinks—drinks on porches and docks, on boats and lawns, in living rooms and kitchens and dens. The high metallic sheen of gin, the slightly more viscid transparency of vodka, the grain-golden huskiness of bourbon, the paler, caustic timbre of Scotch, the column of beer with its rising fluting of bubbles, the sprig of mint, the slice of orange, the chunk of lime, the delicate bowls of white and red wine floating above the glass table on their invisible stems, the little sticky-rimmed glasses of anisette and Cointreau and B & B and green Chartreuse that followed dinner, chasing the minutes toward midnight, while the more prudent, outsiderish guests peeked at their watches, thinking of the babysitter and tomorrow's sickly-sweet headache. He remembered, from the viewpoint of a host, the magnanimous crunch of ice cubes broken out of their aluminum trays with an authoritative yank of the divider lever, and the pantry's high-shouldered array of half-gallon bottles from the liquor mart beside the superette, the cost of liquor a kind of dues you cheerfully paid for membership in the unchartered club of young couples. How curiously filling and adequate it was, the constant society of the same dozen or so people. Western frontiersmen, Ed remembered reading somewhere, said of buffalo meat that, strange to say, you never tired of eating it. The Franklins' friends would arrive for weekday drinks at six, harried and mussed, children in tow—the women bedraggled by a day of housework, the men with their city pallor fresh off the train—and be slowly transformed; dizzyingly confiding and glamorous and *intime*, they would not leave much before eight, when the time had long passed to get the children decently fed (they had been devouring potato chips and Fig Newtons around the kitchen television) and into bed.

"How did you and Mom *do* it?" Ed's sons and daughters asked him, with genuine admiration, of his old servantless four-child household. His children as they homed in on forty lived in city apartments or virtually gated New Jersey enclaves, with one or two children of their own, whose nurture and protection required daily shifts of Caribbean women, tag-team caregivers, one to achieve the dressing and the administration of breakfast and safe passage to nursery school, and another to supervise the evening meal and bath and bedtime video. Nevertheless, his daughters were exhausted by motherhood, which had come to them late, as a bit of biological moonlighting from their thriving professional careers; conception had been rife with psychic tension and childbirth fraught with peril. His sons spoke solemnly, apprehensively to him about the education of their children and, even more distant, the job prospects available to these toddlers in the twenty-first century. They both, his two sons, performed some inscrutable monkey business among computers and equities, and they thought in long-range demographic curves. Ed had to laugh, being interviewed by them as a kind of pioneer, a survivor of a mythic age of domesticity, when giant parents walked the earth. "You were there," he reminded them. "You remember how it was. Our key concept was benign neglect." But they would not be put off and, indeed, half persuaded him that he had been an epic family man, chopping forests into cabins in the wilderness of the baby boom.

Tracking their own children's progress, they asked him how old they had been when they first crawled, walked, talked, and read, and he was embarrassed to say that he could not remember. "Ask your mother," he told them.

"She says she doesn't remember, either. She says we were all wonderfully normal."

An only child, born in the Depression, Ed had been honored at his birth with the purchase of a big white book, its padded cover proudly embossed "Baby's Book," in which pages printed in dove-colored ink waited for the entry of his early achievements and the dates thereof. He was surprised to discover that his mother, in that little curly backward-slanting hand that seemed to his eyes the very distillation of methodical maternity, had entered everything up through his various graduations and his first wedding; she had not bothered with her grandchildren or his second nuptials. How odd it is, he thought, that America's present prosperity, based upon our outworking the Germans and the Japanese, has produced the same pinched, anxiously cherishing families as the Depression. His children's individual developments had become in his failing mind an amiable tangle while he daily dined on the social equivalent of buffalo meat.

THE lack of recall almost frightened him. Did he help the kids with their homework? He must have. Did he and Alissa ever go grocery shopping together? He had no image of it. The beds, how had they got made, and the meals, how had they got onto the table for twenty-two years? Alissa must have done it all, somehow, while he was reading the sports page. Having the babies, now such a momentous rite of New Age togetherness and unashamed body-worship, was something else she had done alone, in the hospital, without complication or much complaint afterward; the baby just appeared in a basket beside her bed, or at her breast, and in a few days he drove the two of them home, two where there had been one, a doubling like a magic trick whose secret was too quick for the eye. The last childbirth, he did remember, came on a winter midnight, and the obstetrician, awakened, had swung by

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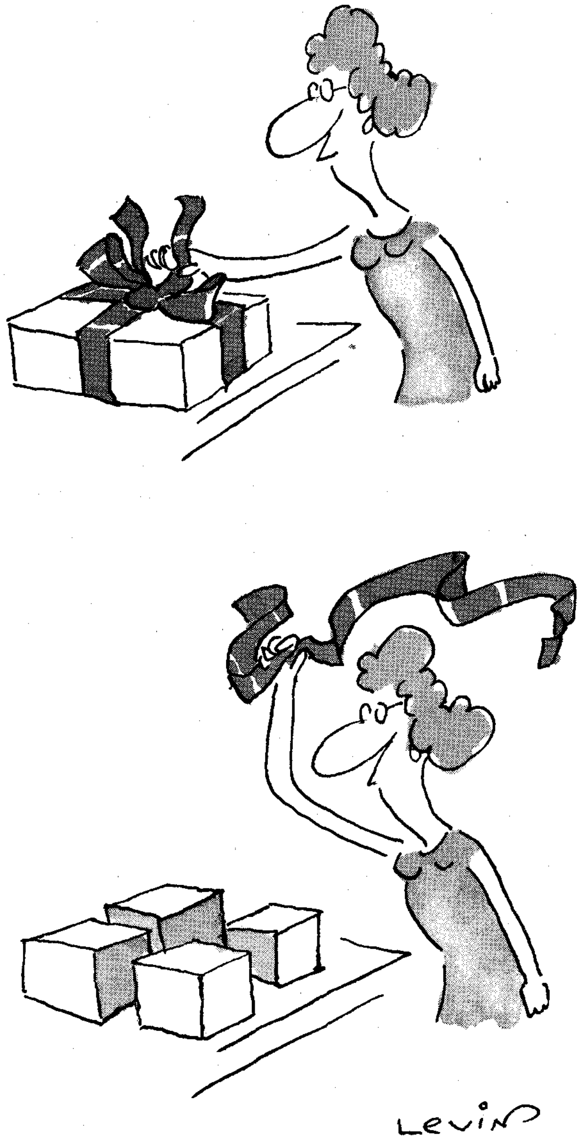


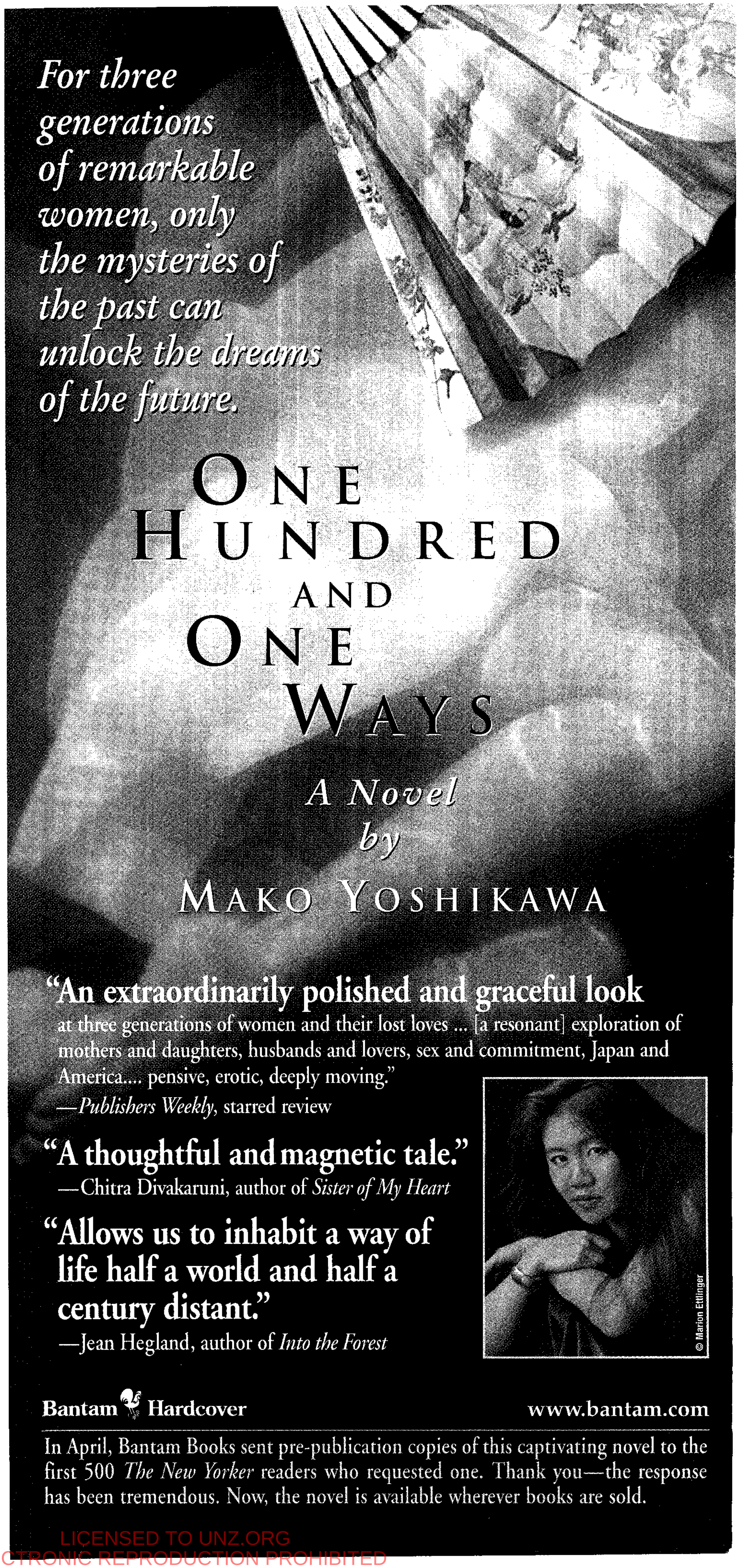
in his car for her, and she had looked up smiling from the snowy street, like a Christmas caroller, and disappeared into the doctor's two-tone Buick. Left alone with the residue of their children, he had been jittery, he remembered, and convinced that a burglar or crazed invader was in the big creaky house with him, and had fallen asleep only after taking a golf club—a three-iron, selected for its length—into bed with him, for protection.

He tried to picture Alissa with a vacuum cleaner and couldn't, though he remembered himself, in the dining room of the first house they had lived in, wielding a wallpaper steamer, laying the big square pan against the wall for a minute or two and stripping the paper with a broad putty knife and, in drenched shorts and T-shirt, wading through curling wet sheets of faded silver flowers. Once a week, in that same room, she would serve flank steak, it came to him, the brown meat nicely tucked around a core of peppery stuffing, and the whole platter, garnished with parsley and little red-skinned potatoes, redolent of bygone home economics, of those touching fifties-born culinary ambitions that sought to perpetuate a sense of the family meal as a pious ceremony heavy with female labor. All those meals slavishly served, and in the end he had cast her away like an outworn shoe. Vanessa and he, with no children to feed, had become grazers, snackers, eaters-out, sometimes taking their evening meal separately, picking at microwave-safe containers while Peter Jennings put warmth into the news.

"But what did you do about *sleep*? About children waking up all night?" one of his hardworking daughters, with tender blue shadows beneath her eyes, persisted.

"You all slept through, virtually from birth," he told her, suspecting he was lying but unable to locate the truth of it. There had been a child whimpering about an earache and falling asleep with the hurting ear pressed against the heat of a fresh-ironed dish towel. But was this himself as a child? He could not remember Alissa with an iron in her hand. He did remember getting out of bed in the pit of night and bringing a squalling armful of protoplasm back to bed and handing it to Alissa, who was already sitting up with her nightie straps lowered, her bare chest shining. He would go back to sleep to the sound of tiny lips sucking, little feet softly kicking. He had been the baby, it seemed. Yet no social workers came to the door to rescue his children from abuse, no neighbors complained to the authorities, the children went off to the school bus dressed like the others—like little clowns in the space-age outfits of synthetic fabrics decades removed from the dark woollens, always damp, that he himself had worn—and rose more or less smoothly through the passages of school and, like smart bombs, found colleges and mates and jobs, so he must have been an adequate parent and householder. "It frightens me," he confessed to his daughter, "how little I remember."

The Saturday afternoons of it all, the masculine feats of maintenance, the changing of the storm windows to screens, the cellar workbench where spiders built webs across the clutter of rusting tools. The heating, electricity, telephone, and water bills—he could not see himself writing a single check, but he must have written many, all cashed, cancelled, and stored in Alissa's attic, along with the slides, the scrapbooks, the school reports and tinted school photographs that had accumulated over twenty-two years of days, each with its ups and downs, its mishaps, its sniffles, its excited tales told by children venturing toward adulthood, through a world that on every side was new to them. Ed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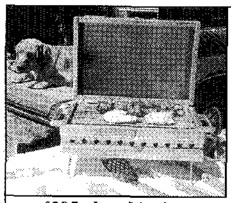

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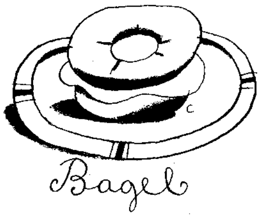
had lost the anatomy. He was like an astronomer before the Voyagers, before the Hubble telescope, working with blurs. He remembered being in love with one or another man's wife, getting drunk after dinner, Alissa having gone to bed, and listening over and over to "Born to Lose," by Ray Charles, or maybe it was the Supremes' "Stop! In the Name of Love," lifting the player arm from the LP time and again to regroove the band, and being told with a shy smile the next morning by his older son, "You sure listened to that song a lot last night." The curtains for a moment parted; there was a second of shamed focus. His son's bedroom was where Ed had sat sunk in himself and the revolving grooves; he had kept the boy, who had to get up for school, awake.

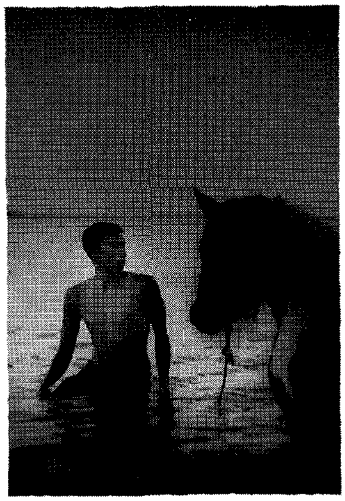
And what of his girls' dating, that traditional tragicomedy, with its overtones of Attic patricide, in the age of the sitcom? His older daughter had gone off to boarding school when she was fifteen, and his younger daughter had been but twelve when he left the house. He could scarcely remember a single hot rod swerving into the crackling driveway to carry off one of his trembling virgins.

NOW this younger daughter invited him to have drinks on a boat. He didn't have to drink liquor, of course, she explained. More and more people didn't; it interfered with their training routines. She herself ran in local marathons; her hair, which like Alissa's had begun to turn white early, was cut short as a boy's, to lower wind resistance, he supposed. The deal was this, Dad: the husband of a friend of theirs was turning forty, and she was giving him as one of his presents a sunset cruise in the marshes, and since his parents were coming the friend, the wife—are you following this, Dad?—wanted some other members of the older generation to be there, so could you and Vanessa come, since you know I guess the husband's father from playing a few golf tournaments with him? Actually, when he shook his peer's hand, under the canopy of the flat-bottomed cruise boat, he remembered him as an opponent who had once illegally switched balls on the eighteenth green and then sunk the putt to win the match. At the time, Ed hadn't wished to undergo the social embarrassment of complaining to the officials, but he had avoided club tournaments ever since; now the man—one of those odious exultant retirees with a face increased and thickened by an all-year tan—crowed over that remembered triumph. His wife, who was somewhat younger than he, and preeningly dressed in clothes that would have looked less garish in Florida, fastened onto Vanessa as her only soul mate. Ed drifted away, trying to hide among the drinking young couples, to whom he had nothing to say. Not drinking did that—it deprived you of things to say.

How strange it was to be once more at a party where the women were still menstruating. Lean, smart, they moved and twittered and struck poses with an electricity like that in silent movies, which look speeded up. The men in their checked jackets and pastel slacks were boyish and broad—relatively clumsy foils for their wives' animation, which in the shuffle of the party kept sprouting new edges, abrupt new angles of slightly startled loveliness. Ed inhaled, as if to extract from the salt air the scent of their secretions, their secrets. It had been at parties like this that he had met Vanessa Bradley, had mingled with her and her husband. The similarity of her name to Alissa's had been one of the attractions; she would be a wife with a "v" added, for vim and vigor, for vivacity and vagina and victory. He had fallen in love with her, she had fallen with him, and here they were, more than twenty years later.



The boat trundled, with its burden of canned music and clinking drinks and celebrating couples, out through the winding channel between the black-mud banks of the golden-green marsh toward the wider water, where islands crammed with shingled summer houses slowly changed position, starboard to port, as the captain put it through a scenic half circle. There was a white lighthouse, and a stunning sunstruck slope where some



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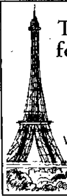
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baron of old had decreed a symmetrical pattern of trimmed shrubs like a great ideogram, and a mock-Tudor cluster as tight as an Italian hilltop village, the eaves and dormer peaks beaded with ruddy low light, and a marina whose pale masts stood as thick as wheat, and a nappy blue-green far stretch of wooded land miraculously yet undeveloped, and the eastward horizon of the open sea already darkening to receive its first starlight while the undulating land to the west still basked under luminous salmon stripes. Ed silently gazed outward at all this, and his fellow-passengers gave it moments of notice, but the main thrust of their attention was inward, toward each other, in bright and gnashing conversations growing shrill as the drinks sank in, a feast of love drowning out the canned music. That was how it was, how he had been, the living moment awash with beauty ignored in the quest for a better moment, slightly elsewhere, with some slightly differing other, while the weeds grew in the peony beds, and dust balls gathered beneath the sofa, and the children, unobserved, plotted their own escapes, their own elsewheres.

A few children had come along with their parents and, after being admonished not to fall overboard, fended for themselves. To one boy, rapt beside him at the rail, Ed on the homeward swing pointed out a headland and a rosy mansion whose name he knew, beyond the marsh grasses now drinking in darkness as the tide slipped away from their roots. Vanessa, on the drive home, volunteered, "The birthday boy's father's wife and I have a number of mutual acquaintances, it turned out. She said an old college roommate of mine, Angela Hart, just had a double mastectomy." Ed thought of confiding in turn how magically strange he had found it to be again among fertile women, with all the excitement that bred, but, though he might in his youthful cruelty have once said something like this to Alissa—anything to get her to respond, to get the blood flowing—between Vanessa and him there had come to prevail the tact of two cripples, companion victims of time. ◆

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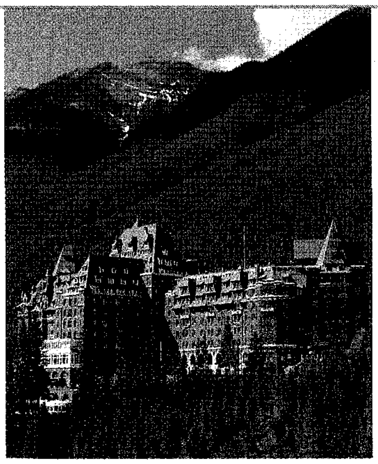
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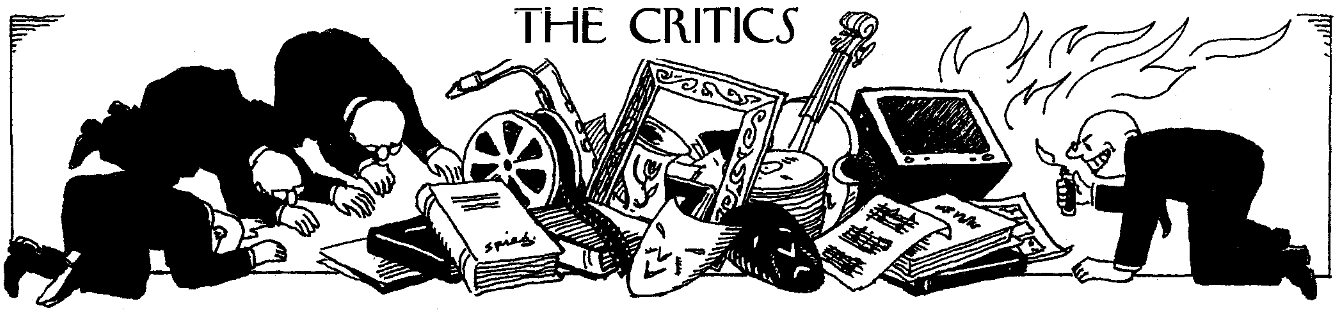


A CRITIC AT LARGE

IN PURSUIT OF INFINITY

The greatest space empire was born long, long ago, in Brooklyn.

BY OLIVER MORTON

When the magnificent bulk of an Imperial Star Destroyer passed over the heads of cinema audiences and into the opening sequence of "Star Wars," spectators happily accepted the Galactic Empire behind it. What but a Galactic Empire would have any use for such a thing? Yet, of all the science-fictional wonders that "Star Wars" put on the screen—big, hairy aliens, talking robots, floating cities, space stations the size of small moons—none is quite so absurd as a Galactic Empire, with its population of quadrillions spread over light-years. It's hard enough holding states together on a single planet.

One accepts the premise, knowing that absurdity is no obstacle to enjoyment. The absurdity, furthermore, had been worn down by familiarity. By 1977, Galactic Empires were utterly familiar. They were just one of the conventions of the science-fiction genre—and a slightly musty one, at that. Editing an anthology of Galactic Empire stories in 1975, Brian Aldiss, a British science-fiction author and critic, revelled in the camp, retro appeal of the stories' "wide-screen baroque."

What Aldiss liked about these "way-back-when futures" was simply that they were fun. In the fifties, which Aldiss took to be the Empires' heyday, there was considerable appeal in a place far away from the possibly radioactive and probably grim future of provincial Earth. Such an Empire was a way to recapture the innocence of Flash Gordon and related nineteen-thirties melodramas, when "atomic blasting" had been as fictional as all the rest of the weaponry.

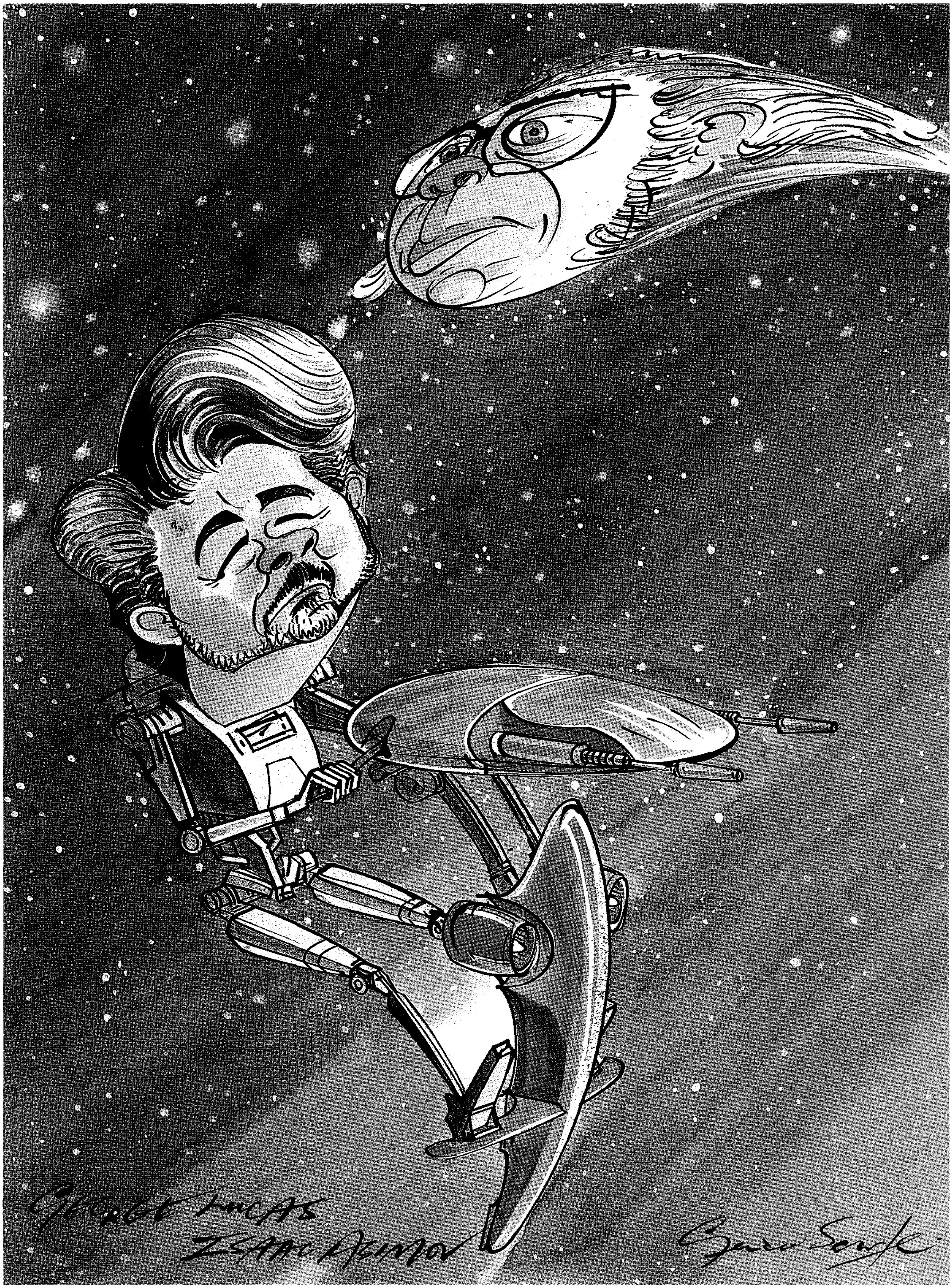
Galactic Empires, Aldiss observed, also allowed a sexiness that the grimmer, more "realistic" parts of the science-fiction canon tended to forgo. "The Rebel of Valkyr," by Alfred Coppel, provides an example: "He watched the graceful line of her unadorned throat, the bare shoulders and breasts, the small waist, the flat, firm stomach—all revealed by the studied nakedness of the fashions of the Inner Marches." Note that reference to the "Inner Marches," typical of the imperial subgenre's imagined archaic geography. Just as a galaxy's stars grow scarcer at the edges, imperial power tends to run down the farther one travels from the glories of its metropolitan heart. Those Inner Marches, far enough from the borders to be reasonably big time, far enough from the center for a certain vigorous raffishness, would be just the place for such sensual delights. It would be no surprise to learn that the couturiers of the Inner Marches provided Jabba the Hutt with Princess Leia's gold bondage bikini.

But the first Galactic Empire worthy of the name was a place that harbored no such sophistications. It was modelled on Rome, to be sure, but more the Rome of Tacitus' annals than that of Suetonius' scuttlebutt. It was vast but not flashy. It was, in fact, gloriously simple. And it served as a setting for one of the great imaginative works of the century.

This prototypical Galactic Empire was created as the background for Isaac Asimov's "Foundation" stories, which were later gathered into three books known as the "Foundation" trilogy. The original stories ran in *Astounding Science Fiction* during the forties, when its editor, John W. Campbell, Jr., was at the peak of his powers and influence. Campbell's self-imposed mission was to create a new, more meaningful science fiction. He wanted to move from stories that simply took place in the future to stories of how futures came to be—stories with the heft of real history and the real science that Campbell thought would shape it. As Alexei and Cory Panshin put it in "The World Beyond the Hill," their impeccably researched, if oddly argued, history of early science fiction, "Campbell's great secret was the degree of his belief in the usefulness, power and truth of science fiction."

In the summer of 1938, Asimov, who was eighteen, made the journey from his father's candy store, in Brooklyn, to the Seventh Avenue building of the Street & Smith publishing house in his second-best suit to offer Campbell his first story. Campbell received him graciously in a little office tucked away behind the presses and mountains of pulp paper, the smell of which could reduce the author to tears decades later. The man and the boy talked for an hour. The inevitable rejection letter came two days later—two pages of thoughtful criticism. Asimov went straight back to his Underwood No. 5 typewriter; a month later, he was back in Campbell's presence, delivering a new story, soaking up the ideas and the cigarette smoke. Another helpful rejection followed, and so a pattern was set. After seven months, Asimov discovered that it was only rejection that brought

GERALD SCARFE


George Lucas
Isaac Asimov

Isaac Asimov's galactic empire set the stage for George Lucas's "Star Wars."

letters; the checks marking acceptance were unaccompanied by a single word.

Asimov saw these early years as the perfect apprenticeship; Campbell, ten years his senior, was somewhere between a mentor and an object of religious veneration. However, when he set off for Campbell's temple on August 1, 1941, he had no story in hand, and no new idea to throw into the crucible of Campbell's imagination. Sitting on the subway, he daydreamed, starting with an illustration in a volume of Gilbert & Sullivan he was carrying—a grenadier guard with wings, from "Iolanthe." Guards suggested empires, and empires, to a young man who had read Gibbon twice, suggested their own downfall.

THERE had been empires in science fiction before. Under what other constitutional arrangement would Ming the Merciless have risen to power over the people of Mongo? But only rarely had those empires spanned the whole galaxy—for example, in Jack Williamson's "After World's End," a potboiler published a few years before in *Marvel Science Stories*. (Campbell had turned it down.) Even so, in retrospect, the idea seems utterly fitting. Asimov's earlier stories showed an ambition to address the history of humanity as a whole, and what political system could encompass such a whole and turn it into a single subject? An empire. And if the imperial subject was all of humanity, the imperial object must also be all-encompassing.

At the time, galaxies were the grandest entities that science could envisage: whirlpools made up of hundreds of billions of stars. An empire that was less than the size of a galaxy would have outside interests, unfinished business. It would have things to concern it besides the internal dynamics of its decline and fall. Asimov wanted something simple but all-encompassing, and so his empire needed to be galactic. To further simplify things, he decided to forgo the delights of aliens; this would be a humans-only affair.

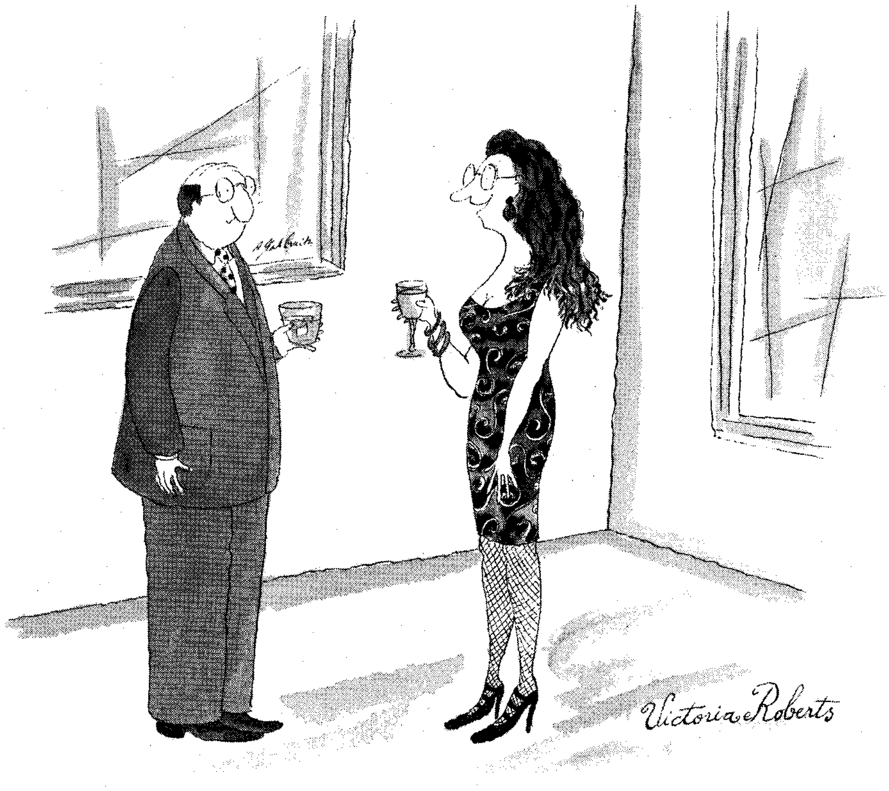
When Asimov got to Campbell's office, he told his mentor that he was going to write about the collapse of a Galactic Empire and the dark ages following, which would be recalled from the vantage point of a second empire, risen from the ashes. "Campbell caught fire," Asimov later recalled. Two hours later, Asimov left with a mandate for a long, open-ended series charting the fall of one empire and the rise of the next.

Campbell was a scientist by training—he studied physics at M.I.T. and Duke—and that training shaped his editing procedure as well as its subject matter. He would take an idea that fascinated him and test it empirically, trying it out on various different authors in his stable and taking note of how it flourished or failed in different conditions. The injection of history into science fiction was one such idea. At the same time that he was sending young Asimov off to cook up the "Foundation," Campbell was also encouraging Robert A. Heinlein, the readers' favorite, in his attempts to build a historical dimension into the genre in a more piecemeal way.

Asimov's breakthrough lay in putting the historical perspective he and Campbell wanted both inside and outside the stories. The stories were written as histories, looking back on events that took place long ago but were still in the readers' future. At the same time, the characters look forward, because Asimov gives his characters a science of history—one that can make predictions about the destiny of humanity. For a man like Campbell, who believed in the power of science to shape the future, this was wonderful. The idea of a science that could predict history is what made the stories such favorites with generations of fans. It was a pipe dream, but a simple, powerful one.

THE "Foundation" stories set the rules for all Galactic Empires to come, even though Asimov kept the Empire itself very much in the background. The first rule is that you must have faster-than-light travel, for an Empire that takes thousands of years to traverse will not remain an empire for long. By and large, the best ships have to be those of the Imperial Navy, or of the smugglers and/or traders who outflank them. Planets play the role of the smallest administrative units, and are often oddly one-dimensional in their climate—one finds whole worlds of glacier, of desert, of swamp. There is a metropolitan world of tall towers, vast domes, and unbridled splendor amid the close-packed suns of the core—Asimov called his Trantor. There is a government loosely based on a historical model. The Roman is most common, but the Chinese dynasties have had their influence, as has Victorian England.

Almost as soon as Asimov created it, the Galactic Empire and its rules became commonplace. Another of Campbell's stars, A. E. van Vogt, embraced an



"I'm expensive, but there are rebates, if you look for them."

imperial future, and so, in the fifties, did Poul Anderson. "Dune" had its empire; so did "The Mote in God's Eye." And so did all sorts of other adventures, like those celebrated in Aldiss's anthology. The Galactic Empire was accepted as the far-off but foregone conclusion of the Space Age that true believers knew was on the way. Man would reach space. Man would expand through space. Man would "imperialize" space.

George Lucas, according to his biographer, Dale Pollock, wanted to recapture the romance of space that had been kindled in him by early NASA missions, and "Star Wars," too, follows the rules that Asimov helped set down. But "Star Wars" and the "Foundation" stories, despite the many things that they share, have fundamental differences: "Star Wars" is about speed, faith, and fairy tales, and the "Foundation" is about size, science, and history. The differences are profound. I remember as a twelve-year-old already steeped in Asimov (and Arthur C. Clarke, Heinlein, and the rest of them) being terribly disappointed by "Star Wars"; it seemed to lack any feeling for the things that made science fiction so important to me.

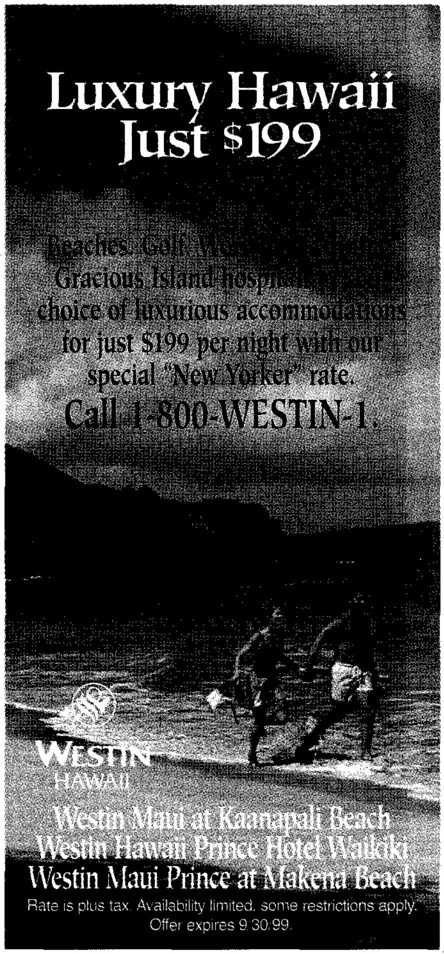
I am mellower now, and can see that Asimov and Lucas were striving for different effects in different media. "Star Wars" is an essay in acceleration. Its iconic moment is the jump into hyperspace, the stars themselves accelerated to a vanishing-point blur. In all three original "Star Wars" films, it is the speed sequences that stick in the mind—the final assault on the Death Star, the ice-skimmers attacking the great walking AT-AT tanks. While speed is not intrinsic to filmed science fiction (Stanley Kubrick delighted in the apparent slowness of his spacecraft in "2001"), it seems crucial to Lucas. His films before "Star Wars"—"THX 1138" and "American Graffiti"—reach a climax with cars moving at high speeds. According to Pollock, Lucas's key direction about almost everything was "faster and more intense." The new "Star Wars" film, "Episode I: The Phantom Menace," has a set-piece drag race.

WRITTEN science fiction prefers size to speed. There is an authentic thrill in imagining big things—an odd sort of purity. The French writer Gaston Bachelard, in "The Poetics of Space," caught it beautifully: "Immensity is a philosophical category of daydream. Daydream undoubtedly feeds on all kinds of sights, but through a sort of natural inclination, it contemplates grandeur. And this contemplation produces an attitude that is so special, an inner state that is so unlike any other, that the daydream transports the dreamer outside the immediate world to a world that bears the mark of infinity." That mark is one that written science fiction endlessly aspires to. It delights in artificial vastness; not just galactic empires but vast structures built out of the raw stuff of space and time, cities and nations uprooted and floating free, cyberspaces that offer infinity inside a microprocessor.

The printed word is much better at conveying this sense of immensity than film is. We have to be told, for example, that the Death Star is vast, because usually it looks no bigger than a beach ball. The battle station's interior offers no vastness at all; its exterior is simply a backdrop against which to measure the speed of smaller spaceships. The "Foundation" series, on the other hand, clearly bears Bachelard's mark of infinity. It's true that when Asimov tried for size that could be measured or enumerated he could let himself down. Numerically, his twenty-five-million-world Empire covers less than a tenth of a per cent of the galaxy's hundred billion suns; Trantor, presented as a single city covering a world, is less crowded than Bangladesh. But such slips do not really matter. The sense of scale that drives the "Foundation" series resides in its ideas. The Empire is not just a set of places and planets: it is humanity's sum total, a great entity that only history can describe and only science can contain.

Lucas did not want to stretch the audience's perceptions to include all of humanity. He wanted to narrow things down to a handful of people amid the superbly orchestrated hurly-burly. The destruction of the Empire in "Star Wars" turns not on vast historical forces but on family relationships and a young man's growing up.

Asimov's sources were historical, as he later quipped in rhyme: "With a drive that's hyperspatial, through the parsecs you will race you'll find that plotting is a breeze, / With a tiny bit of cribbin' from the works of Edward Gibbon and that Greek, Thucydides." Lu-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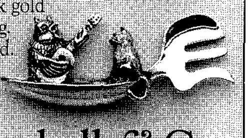

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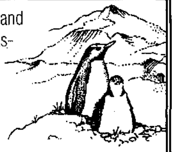


cas looked to myth, and, as a result, produced something simple and personal that lots of people respond to and that hard-core fans endlessly want to decode. Pollock, the Lucas biographer, points out that aspects of every major religion have been read into "Star Wars." The psychosexual imagery of the ovum-like Death Star, susceptible to the penetrative attack of only one of the many little spaceships jostling for entry, delights Freudians. Within the film industry, it was immediately clear that the rebels were would-be independent filmmakers like Lucas and his Yoda, Francis Ford Coppola, and the Empire was Hollywood. Today, every geek in the Valley knows that the Empire is Microsoft.

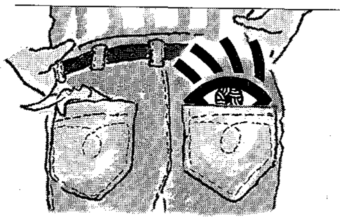
THE more politically minded have seen the attraction of "Star Wars" as lying in a neat inversion of the Vietnam War. In this reading, the American public desperately wanted to support some little low-tech rebels who actually won and to distance itself from a high-tech empire fond of long-range bombing and incapable of dealing with guerrilla tactics. The Vietnam reading was implicitly shared by the technologists in the Pentagon later charged with developing S.D.I.—the strategic defense initiative, which became known as Star Wars. These people did not identify with the ragtag rebels. Kevin Smith, a filmmaker whose characters never miss an opportunity to discuss "Star Wars," put a wonderful parody of the sort of decoding the film inspires into "Chasing Amy." It comes from Hooper, the camp creator of a comic called "White Hating Coon":

> Those movies are about how the white man keeps the brother-man down, even in a galaxy far, far away. You've got this cracker farm boy, Luke Skywalker, Nazi poster boy, blond hair, blue eyes; and then you got Darth Vader, the blackest brother in the galaxy, Nubian god. Now Vader he's a spiritual brother, down with the Force and all that good shit. Then this cracker Skywalker gets his hands on a lightsabre, decides he's going to run the fuckin' universe, gets a whole klan of whites together and they go and bust up Vader's 'hood, the Death Star. Now what the fuck do you call that? Gentrification!!

Out of all these meanings, though, there is one that is reasonably clear—that the spirit triumphs over technology. "Star Wars" treats technology as essentially malign, inhuman, and untrustworthy (except when producing special effects). Only machines that malfunction—the Millennium Falcon, the comic droids—can be good. Don't use the computer, use the Force. In this, it is the antithesis of what Asimov believed. Asimov had an Enlightenment love of reason above all things; and he wanted a better future, not a stirring past.

This is not to say there is no religion in the "Foundation" trilogy. There was, briefly, because Campbell became fascinated by the idea that science itself could in some way be a religion. He persuaded Asimov that his rationalist heroes, originally devoted to the admirable Enlightenment chore of compiling an encyclopedia, should develop a fraudulent theocracy in which technogimmicks pose as miracles. The idea did not flourish in Asimov's hands, but decades later it served to endear the "Foundation" books to the loonies of the Aum Supreme Truth cult, in Japan. Their leader, Shoko Asahara, was a great fan of technology as religion and was entranced by the idea of a total collapse of civilization, in which secretive scientists seek to control the future. Indeed, from the Manson family's appropriation of the do-as-you-will faith extolled in Heinlein's "Stranger in a Strange Land" to Aum's attack on the subways of Tokyo, the association between religion and science fiction has sometimes taken unhappy detours. (One of the stars of *Astounding* while the "Foundation" was getting under way was L. Ron Hubbard; the magazine was in time to be the cradle of Dianetics.)

ASIMOV quickly got rid of Campbell's theocratic fancy and returned to the heart of the "Foundation" series—a science of history which guides the characters whether they know it or not. Again, it is an Enlightenment idea—a rational social physics, like that of the Belgian astronomer Adolphe Quételet, who in the early nineteenth century took the statistical methods used to correct errors in observations of the stars and applied them to human populations. In "Asimov's Biographical Encyclopedia of Science and Technology," the book he professed himself proudest of, Asimov summed up Quételet's achievement like this: "Randomness invaded the human realm, and in one more way life (and humanity in par-



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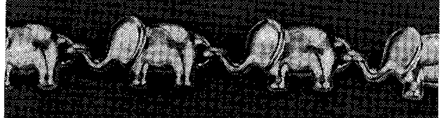
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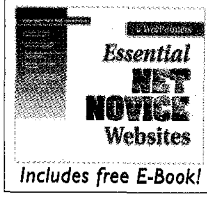
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ticular) was shown to follow the same laws that govern the inanimate universe." Asimov was a deeply orderly man. It's no surprise that he—and many of those who read him—wanted a world with the orderliness of a laboratory, and such a world is what the "Foundation" stories offer. He did not see that such orderliness represents the quintessence of human involvement, not its absence. The universe, while lawful, is just as messy as people are, when left ungoverned.

After a few stories, this love of the lawful pushed Asimov into a creative dilemma: when characters and readers know that the history they share is predestined, conflicts become harder to arrange. By 1948, after eight stories, Asimov gave up; he had been eager to stop sooner, but Campbell wouldn't let him. It was not until the early eighties—when, in the wake of "Star Wars," big-name science-fiction writers became sought-after properties—that his publishers inveigled him back to the future he had forsaken. From 1983 until his death, in 1992, he wrote a great deal more about his empire, its growth, and its fate, tying it together with almost all the other fiction he had ever written, and turning it into a vast, interconnected, and increasingly disappointing whole. To make it all hang together, he introduced layer after layer of secret cabals, human and robotic, endlessly solving the problems in the narrative. Thus was the orderliness of the laboratory achieved, but with significant costs; conspiracies, even well-meaning ones, lack the grandeur of scientific laws.

After Asimov's death, his estate allowed three stars of contemporary science fiction—Gregory Benford, Greg Bear, and David Brin—to write a novel apiece set in Asimov's universe. Nothing strange there. Novels based in the worlds of successful films and TV shows choke the science-fiction shelves of every bookshop. There seems to be an endless supply of novels set in the "Star Wars" milieu. But those are elaborations, not collaborations. In the end, all power resides in George Lucas, truly imperial in his absolute creative authority over his realm. In contrast, the three new "Foundation" novels—the third and the jolliest, Brin's "Foundation's Triumph," appears this spring (HarperPrism; $25)—are far more than just new pieces of the same old story. They add up to a deeply affectionate work of literary deconstruction. The younger writers have dismantled the "Foundation" series from the inside, sorted out the contradictions of its sorry final form, and rebuilt it along new, freer lines.

In the original "Foundation" stories—and to some extent in these latest ones, too—the characters spend most of their time in earnest conversation, trying to understand what's going on. In this way, the stories echo the genre that they helped to shape. In science fiction, as in science proper, other people's ideas are endlessly tossed about, disputed, surpassed. For writers and fans, the genre is a conversation: the future cannot be predicted, but there is room for endless discussion of futures that might be, of futures that used to be, and of what they mean today. These days, despite the return of "Star Wars," the talk is rarely of Galactic Empires, or of the triumph of reason. But they are subjects that helped to get the conversation going. Those taking part in it will remember their debt to Isaac Asimov as they endlessly reinterpret their way into the unplanned, unimperial world to come. ♦

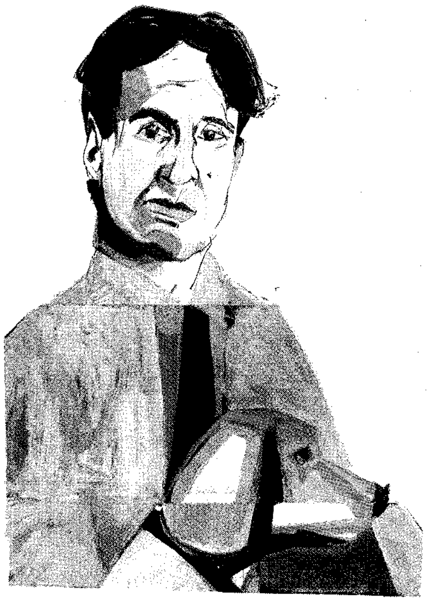
BOOKS

OFF THE ROAD

A strange journey through the Pacific Northwest.

BY JOYCE CAROL OATES

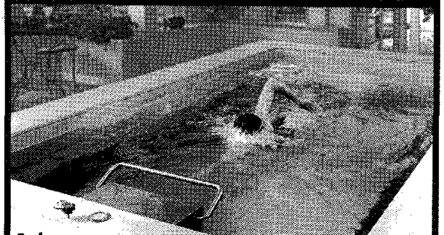
"STRANGE and stranger still," thinks Ben Givens, M.D., the elderly hero of David Guterson's perambulatory new novel, "East of the Mountains" (Harcourt Brace; $25), echoing the reader's private judgment and calling to mind, perhaps inadvertently, the child Alice's exclamation "Curiouser and curiouser!" in "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland." Like the ever wide-eyed Alice, Dr. Givens has left familiar domestic surroundings to embark upon a sequence of startling, somewhat disjointed adventures. Like Alice, he meets a series of colorful cameo characters who relate to him as if, somehow, they already knew him and were bringing him messages relevant to his predicament. (Ben is a terminal cancer patient who has left his home, in Seattle, to stage a "gun accident" death in the wilds of the Columbia Basin.) Like Alice nibbling her magic mushroom, with surreal consequences, Ben smokes marijuana for the first time in his life, and experiences vivid memory-dreams. Like Alice, Ben is a pilgrim of sorts who has experiences that would exhaust, demoralize, and traumatize most of us. What is a terminally ill seventy-three-year-old retired heart surgeon doing on foot in the mountains—having crashed his car in the rain—and hunting for food with the double-barrelled Winchester he plans to use to kill himself? What is he doing, roaming like Lear on the moors, being threatened by wolfhounds and their cruel master in a nightmare nocturnal coyote hunt like something in Cormac McCarthy's gothic Western "Blood Meridian"?



David Guterson

RICCARDO VECCHIO

When Ben telephones his daughter, in an awkwardly rendered scene in-



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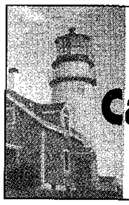

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tended to bring us up to date on his myriad adventures to that point (there are more adventures to come!), the young woman responds the way the reader might, as if Guterson hoped to disarm critical incredulity: "This is a really weird story. I can't believe I'm hearing this." (And she doesn't even know about the suicide plan.) Yes, it's crazy, Ben agrees, but he's determined to continue his journey. Again, like the feckless Alice, Ben survives his adventures remarkably unscathed, and even finds himself performing a "miracle" in a migrant workers' camp; he is then transported back to civilization by a sort of fairy godmother, who conveniently appears, and then disappears, having performed her plot function. Though Ben Givens had left home to avoid "regions of pain so terrible, they obliterated all argument," the novel seems to be making the point, which will be confusing to most readers, that his decision to return home is somehow a reaffirmation of life. Is he not as seriously ill as we've been led to believe? Why, then, the endless complications of his rather implausible suicide plan? Perhaps predictably, "East of the Mountains" ends with Ben having completed a circular journey. The novel's final words are Ben's, announcing, "I'm home."

"East of the Mountains" is a strange, unwieldy hybrid, not believable as myth and scarcely more believable as a realistic novel. It's a sort of geriatric "On the Road," lacking Kerouac's inspired, adolescent American goofiness in its pursuit of ambitious adult themes, like the nature of life and death, the purpose of existence, and parental responsibility. Like Guterson's first, more compelling novel, "Snow Falling on Cedars" (1994), it is set in a meticulously described Pacific Northwest: where snow fell lyrically and ceaselessly in "Cedars," rain falls lyrically and almost ceaselessly in "East of the Mountains." Generous in detail, visually alive, abounding in the names of towns, rivers, and mountains, "East of the Mountains" is written in prose that is straightforward and unpretentious in a young-Hemingway mode, though even the very young Hemingway would disdain such bald statements of theme:

> He was coming into the place he'd sought when he'd set out on his journey. From Quincy it was six miles to the Columbia. Over the crest of Babcock Ridge and across the mouth of Lynch Coulee, beyond the trading post at Trinidad, and then upriver toward Rock Island. Northwest of Baird and Willow Springs, but southwest of Moses Coulee. Southwest of the Burlington Northern Line and the road to Palisades. It was the place Ben wanted to end his life, if he could only get to it. A surcease from living where his life had started. A neat, uncomplicated end.

Such language isn't suited to far-fetched plot episodes and narcotic reveries; there are passages in "East of the Mountains" that seem merely perfunctory, like uninspired journalism—hasty sketches of scenes into which "characters" will step, perform their function vis-à-vis Ben, and then fade out. And where the novel pauses to delve into the past, in an effort to bolster the significance of the motile present, it seems weighted down, static. There is an elaborate back story to "East of the Mountains," which constitutes, in fragments, a virtual novel in itself, involving what appears to have been a good deal of loving research into apple growing in Washington State, the lives of American soldiers stationed in Italy during the Second World War, and wartime nursing. Such detail, poorly integrated with the episodic plot, suggests the proclivity of the realist, not the mythmaker.

"East of the Mountains" is an ambitious novel, however, at least in conception. Through the interstices of plot we can glimpse the author's noble intention:

> [Ben] thought of those Hindu wanderers he'd seen on a public television documentary, mendicants abroad with begging bowls, dressed in rags and clutching staffs, divested of all other property, seeking to meet the world unencumbered, aspiring, always, toward—what did they call it?—atman, the self, God.

Lighting a stick of incense given to him by an angelic messenger in the form of a young woman hippie of "tormenting" beauty, Ben

> thought of the Himalaya Range, mountains he had never seen. It seemed profound that this incense had traveled from Tibetan monks on the Sikkimese border to a motel in sagebrush country. Its convoluted journey here seemed evidence of God's vast reach.

Unfortunately, "God's vast reach" isn't a presence seriously felt or evoked in "East of the Mountains," any more than Ben Givens, a somewhat cranky senior citizen travelling with a wallet full of credit cards and the possibility of telephoning for help at any time, is a worthy

BRIEFLY NOTED

THE SOUND OF TRUMPETS, by John Mortimer (Viking; $23.95). From the indefatigable Mortimer comes another entrant in the hilarity sweepstakes—a contest that could have been rigged by Lord Titmuss, Mortimer's wiliest hero, since many of the books in the running are by Sir John himself. The third volume in the series about this Tory schemer (it follows "Paradise Postponed" and "Titmuss Regained") chronicles the bewildering career of the young Labour candidate Terry Flitton, who madly accepts Titmuss's offer of aid when the local Conservative M.P. is found face down in a swimming pool and the seat Flitton covets becomes vacant.

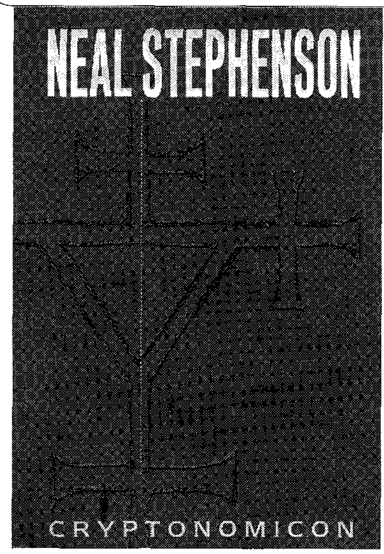
THE TRAGIC MENAGERIE, by Lydia Zinovieva-Annibal; translated from the Russian by Jane Costlow (Northwestern; $16.95). In this fictionalized autobiography, written at the turn of the century, Vera, an intensely spiritual child, is much happier in the bogs and forests of her family's summer estate, where she befriends a couple of bear cubs and a crane, than in the rigid hands of her governesses in St. Petersburg, "the hateful stone city, where even the mud wasn't real." The adults around Vera are flustered by her increasingly deceitful antics as her sense of disillusionment with the world grows. Zinovieva-Annibal's narrative is a philosophical meditation on the dilemma of a questioning child who is rarely given satisfactory answers and is forced to strike out, uncertainly, on her own.

SERVANTS OF NATURE: A HISTORY OF SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTIONS, ENTERPRISES, AND SENSIBILITIES, by Lewis Pyenson and Susan Sheets-Pyenson (Norton; $32.50). This survey ranges in time and space from Sumerian astronomy to the formulation of the theory of relativity, in New Jersey. It demonstrates how science has evolved in different societies, spawning innumerable organizations—universities, museums, observatories—for teaching, research, and popularization. The book's inclusiveness helps us recognize not only how science affects everything, from daily life to government budgets, but also the way we think about everything, from politics to poetry.

THE AMATEUR: AN INDEPENDENT LIFE OF LETTERS, by Wendy Lesser (Pantheon; $24). The founder and editor of *The Threepenny Review*, Lesser is a cultural critic as well. This collection of pieces demonstrates her range (Mark Morris, the rehab center Synanon, Dickens, neologisms, Harvard, and California are among the subjects) while illustrating the perils of salmagundi in a work billed as autobiography. Nevertheless, on every page Lesser emerges as not only smart but modest and likable; it's perhaps no accident that in the best of these essays she's happily examining the triumphs of others, and that she seems less sure when, almost halfheartedly, she turns her attention to herself.

May 20th, 1830: The fountain pen is patented and writing is revolutionized.

May 20th, 1999: Neal Stephenson's new novel is published and it happens again.



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American version of a Hindu wanderer. The thin soil of "East of the Mountains" is evident in the novel's concluding scene, in which Dr. Givens is called upon, as we somehow knew he would be, to deliver a baby in filthy conditions in a migrant camp (where he has, improbably, signed on to pick apples). This scene is so unconvincingly rendered, so preposterous as to seem virtually a cartoon. After a ghastly twenty-four-hour labor, a fifteen-year-old girl and her baby are saved by Ben's intervention; whereas in life such a childbirth would surely entail a fatal hemorrhage, it's glibly noted here that the young mother isn't even bleeding. It's the most shameless of cliché scenes out of the vast repertoire of male fantasies: hapless and fumbling females requiring the deft hand of the master to perform a miracle where, as usual, they were going to botch things. ♦

MUSICAL EVENTS

SCHUBERT ON THE TOWN

Searching for intimacy in the recital hall.

BY ALEX ROSS

In a famous painting by Gustav Klimt, Schubert plays the piano in a gauzy room, candles flickering around him like fireflies and a woman listening in uncertain rapture. If there is any truth in the painting—and it does feel true to the music, despite the overlay of fin-de-siècle sexuality—then Schubert would have been bewildered by the settings in which his music is now so often heard: big, official halls; half-interested listeners flipping through programs to read the lyrics or the donors' lists; performers trying to squeeze a world of feeling into two tightly programmed hours.

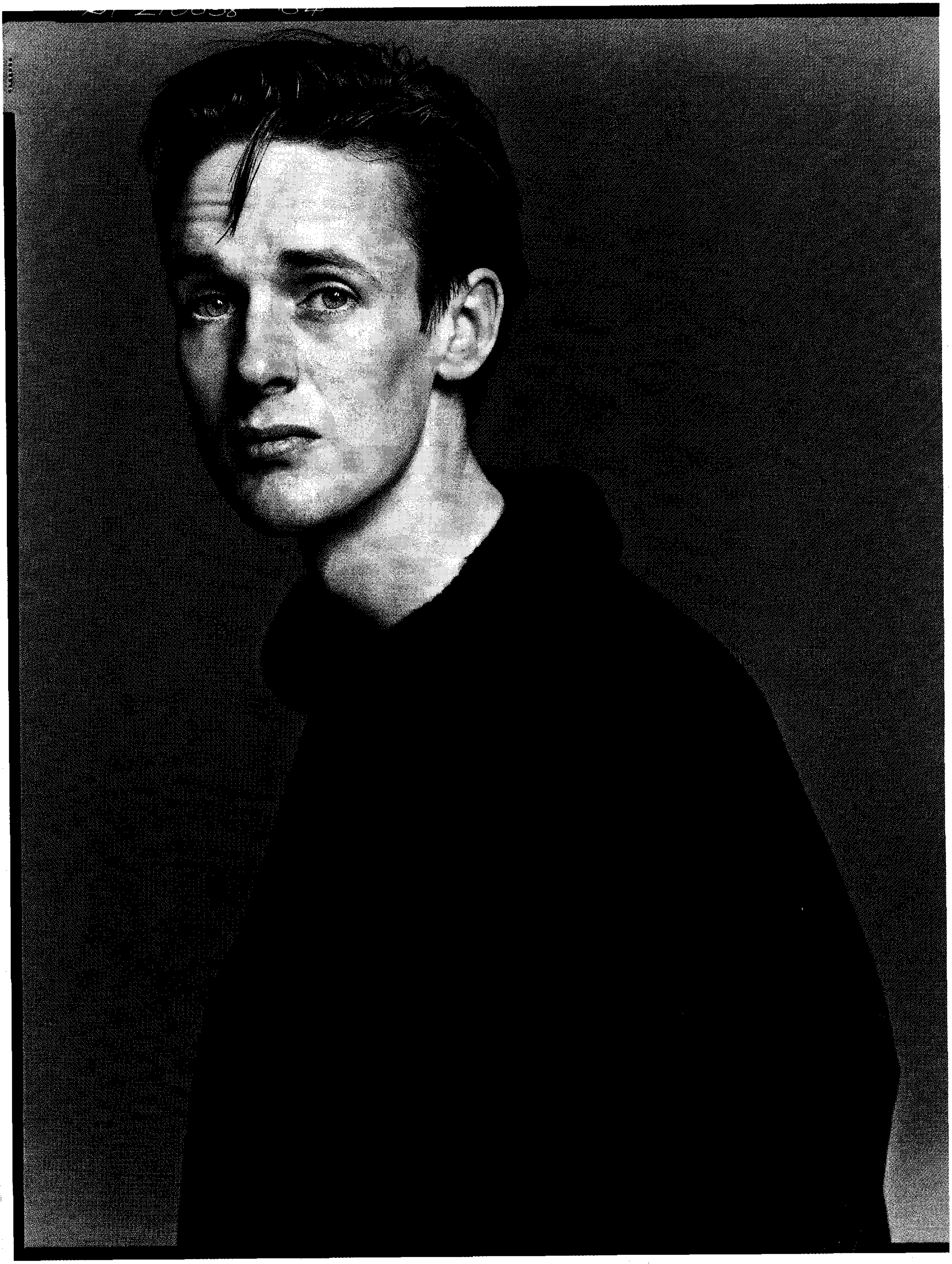
New York lacks an ideal hall for chamber music, song recitals, and piano recitals of the non-titanic variety. The city needs a small, characterful space, like London's Wigmore Hall, in which a musician can intimately mesmerize an audience. I felt that lack acutely in recent weeks, when various performers—the pianist Alfred Brendel, the baritone Matthias Goerne, and the tenor Ian Bostridge—devoted part or all of several concerts to Schubert. Brendel and Goerne performed the great song cycles "Die Winterreise" and "Schwanengesang" in Carnegie Hall; Brendel played Schubert solo on the same stage; and Bostridge, accompanied by Julius Drake, devoted half of a recital at Alice Tully Hall to Schubert songs. These places fit neither the music nor the voices. The sound thinned out on its way to the ears. It's a pity, because fine young lieder singers are arriving in quick succession, and the audiences for them are growing.

Bostridge's appearance in Tully was particularly frustrating. This riveting young Englishman made his New York début last year at the Frick Collection, in an elegant circular room that puts the performer virtually in the middle of the audience. (Unfocussed, wacky acoustics are the drawback.) There Bostridge sang an all-Schumann program, which has to rank as one of the concerts of the decade. The singing was often very beautiful, and when it was not beautiful it achieved something rarer—sheer terror. Several people whom I spoke to afterward felt the same: Bostridge—an accredited Oxford historian with a willowy, Beardsley aspect—touched on the demonic. He not only projected the darksome psychological states of Schumann's "Dichterliebe" with startling force but made a dire necessity of the very act of performance. Several times, I glanced down to check the program, and when I looked up again I found Bostridge's eyes flashing at me: I had a curious foreboding that he was going to come down the aisle and snatch the program from my hands.

When Bostridge came to Tully Hall, word of him had spread, and the hall was packed. But he was simply too far away to cast a spell as he did last year—at least, for those of us who weren't in the front rows. The problem was not a matter of lung power. Although Bostridge has a smallish voice, he can make it carry. He demonstrated as much two weeks later, when he sang Berlioz's "Nuits d'Été" and Britten's "Serenade" at Carnegie, over a dreary accompaniment by the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields. At Tully Hall, the missing element was the intangible one of atmosphere. It is a cavernous space, with all the charm of a modern, with-it Episcopal chapel, and proved a poor theatre for Bostridge's brainy melodrama, which involves a calculated roughing up of the voice at climactic moments, much swaying forward and back, and a play of emotion on the face.

Still, a big audience got a taste of the singer's power—most of all in a searing account of "Erlkönig," the standout in a conservative and lyrical selection of Schubert songs. Bostridge sharply delineated the characters of Goethe's gruesome tale: he played the child, the father, and the goblin with equal conviction, suggesting heights and depths of his voice which aren't really there. He draws on various vocal manipulations that substitute for traditional tenorial power. You could compare him in this regard to Peter Pears, another English tenor who made much of limited means, except that Bostridge's tone is rather lovelier. He may sing a microtone off pitch, or brush over the pitch in a slide, but he does so in a sparing, pointed way that leaves no doubt of his technical control. His tricks owe as much to popular styles as to traditional classical singing: he does a sort of mixture of classical, cabaret, and folk. (He said in a recent interview that he admires Bob Dylan, of all people.) In the end, he seems to bring alive the bohemian Viennese culture from which the Schubert songs came. He is not a good singer; he is a great one.

For several weeks, Alfred Brendel was in residence at Carnegie Hall. He played chamber music, solo recitals, lieder evenings, and a con-



Ian Bostridge, London, June 20, 1998. Photograph by Richard Avedon.

certo (the Mozart D-Minor, with the Met Orchestra). Schubert figured prominently in these somewhat overelaborate programs, which included works of Haydn, Mozart, and Schumann in unexpected sequences. Brendel accompanied Goerne in "Winterreise" and "Schwanengesang," and also took on the sprawling A-Major Sonata. He is an unpredictable performer: one night he can give lavishly of his passionate intellect and the next he can offer little more than a collection of nervous mannerisms. Unfortunately, the nervous Brendel seemed to prevail in the concerts I attended.

Brendel's Schubert, especially, was hurt by what seemed like a fear of silence. A full bar of rest in the finale was skipped over. There were hardly any pauses for breath between phrases. At the end of a song in "Winterreise," Brendel actually raised his right hand while holding a chord with his left, as if begging the audience to keep quiet. His accents were jumpy and unpredictable: notes on the second or third beat would ping forward when a stress on the downbeat would have made better musical sense. The A-Major Sonata began splendidly and then sagged in the finale: the bold contrasting episodes in C-sharp minor were strangely muted, and the movement never really took flight. (I've been listening, for comparison, to a brilliant, unsettling new recording by Mitsuko Uchida of the A-Major Sonata and the companion C-Minor; in her playing, both finales go through the roof.) And Brendel's song accompaniments were too fastidiously shaded—a pulling forward here, a pulling back there—to establish the walking pulse that Schubert's scene-painting requires.

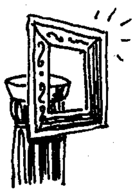
Goerne, a young German who has rapidly won international fame for his golden baritone, suffered in the velvety vastness of Carnegie. He could be heard clearly, but his sound was not enveloping. Goerne is the opposite of Bostridge: he is a conservative, even-keeled singer, who presents the music without expressive fuss. Still, he cannily intensified the mood by degrees as "Winterreise" went on its wintry, death-drunk way. In the last four or five songs, he pressed his voice in a few bursts of emotion, and when the protagonist met the hurdy-gurdy man at the end he had the detached tone of one who had already died. Goerne was strong, too, in the Heine songs of "Schwanengesang": his voice and bearing in the nightmare world of "Der Doppelgänger" had an apt, Peter Lorre quality. Goerne's Schubert was very good, even excellent; but in this music excellence isn't quite enough. Bostridge, with his "Erlkönig," hinted at a "Winterreise" that would make a small room sweat with fear. ♦

THE ART WORLD

AMERICAN PIE

The Whitney's empty blockbuster.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL



WHAT'S American? I am. I've always been obsessed with my nationality—not that I understand it. Americanness is the world's most abstract political and spiritual condition. After all, anyone from anywhere can become an American. Raise your right hand and you're in, like Benjamin or Aretha Franklin. To call yourself something special—a chip off the old Mayflower, say—and to uphold that thing as being exceptionally American is obnoxious. You will get jumped, deservedly, if you try it. Americanness is nobodiness. Deep down, I feel like nobody—and this void in me is the earnest of my belonging. A hole in my heart pledges allegiance to America.

As a nation, the United States is a fiction that stands on three legs: a set of still contested eighteenth-century political documents; the cautionary example of the Civil War; and the daily consumption of mass culture. That's it. Everything else, however tremendous, is secondary. Tripods are precarious, as I'm reminded whenever I encounter intimidatingly foursquare foreigners—all these knitted residues of race, land, religion, and language. The rest of the world deems Americans superficial, and that is correct. What the rest of the world may not grasp is that we are profoundly superficial. The supple, adhesive, masking surfaces that are maintained by our culture industries around the clock let us pass for a people. (As a balance-of-trade bonus, their shimmer seduces the global entertainment market.)

For me, the most telling nugget of American literature is two lines in Julia Ward Howe's "The Battle Hymn of the Republic": "In the beauty of the lilies / Christ was born across the sea." That is to say, Christ sure didn't come from anywhere around here. We lack sacred ground, unless it's been expropriated from the Indians. We skitter about this beautiful continent like drops of water on a hot plate. Meanwhile, we shrink from national introspection for good reason. Every inward probe of Americanness runs off a cliff immediately. It is in free fall that we recognize ourselves and, often with rather complicated laughter, salute one another.

We have one main poet and one main artist. The poet is Walt Whitman, who finessed the indignity in America of being someone in particular by becoming, for the course of a poem, everyone in particular. Our artist is the mooncalf Jackson Pollock, whose drip paintings give lyrical and lumpen, comprehensive presence to nobodiness. Andy Warhol gave presence to a symptom of this condition: America's cult of fame. Throughout our high culture, the real American feeling appears in fissures and fragments, when nonentity blooms. It happens in "The Great Gats-

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The Whitney's come-on: The show's desperate ambition makes the art look shrunken and stale. Photograph by Jeff Mermelstein.

by." Much of the blues is about it. American emptiness ate Edgar Allan Poe up.

"Make Some Sense of America," say the ads for the Whitney Museum of American Art's huge, desperately ambitious exhibition "The American Century: Art and Culture, Part I, 1900-1950," which jams all five floors of the building with about seven hundred thematically grouped art works and artifacts. The ads rankle. What does the Whitney imagine folks are up to, out here today? ("Take a Break from Making Some Sense of America"—now, that would entice.) I have nonetheless obeyed the ad literally, postponing until now my verdict that the show, which was curated by Barbara Haskell, is forced and lame. Its wrongheadedness starts with the title, a stupid torturing of Henry Luce's hortatory slogan of 1941, and goes to the bone. Lessons can be learned from this sizable failure.

One is that triumphalism, the quite respectably American form of hysteria which Luce pushed, is not fungible. It is perfect for a day or two after our team wins the big game, but ordinarily we must have recourse to milder ways of feeling good about ourselves. By trying to inject fifty years' worth of multitudinous stuff with V-J Day juice, the Whitney makes most of it look baffled and sullen—especially the painting and sculpture, which dominate the show. The modest prestige of American modern art before the Second World War, which has been strenuously nurtured by revisionist art historians since the nineteen-sixties, may never be recovered. Having applauded, at various times in the past, the rediscovery of many of the little masters in this show, I now find myself understanding why each of them came to be neglected in the first place. Even the passionate Marsden Hartley and the irrepressible Man Ray come off as shrunken and stale. The show exudes the exquisitely demoralizing air of a salesman hawking goods for which he has no personal use.

Nearly all American art of the period in question was not only provincial in relation to European art but off the point of America. It was a nervous, prickly, hothouse assortment of transplants and grafts, directed toward un-self-confident New York circles even when it affected universalist or heartland bona fides. Edward Hopper was an exception: a New Yorker who invented an empire of American solitude. Sometimes I feel like going down on my knees in front of a Hopper, but what would I do then? (Pray to Nothing.) Another exception was Norman Rockwell, a homegrown genius of democratic manners who, in the show, seems to be smiling beatifically at so many fellow-Americans doing their things, however weirdly.

Halcyon American sophisticates were bound to hate Rockwell, because, as a magazine illustrator, he stood with industrialized popular culture. As long as Americans felt inferior to Europe, many of us were more Roman than the Romans, parading secondhand high-cultural hauteur. America's spontaneous strengths were termed “kitsch”—an epithet that obliterates clear thought. Note what happens at the Whitney when some choice product of popular culture—music, movie clips, filmed dance, photojournalism—obtrudes in the installation: a viewer's heart leaps with joy is what happens. The video replay of a cherry-toned pan of the incredible pseudo-Babylonian set in D. W. Griffith's “Intolerance”—a beauty-of-the-lilies orgasm if ever there was one—struck me, for a moment, as worth whole rooms of semi-Cubist paintings. This wasn't the paintings' fault. It was the Whitney's for pitting frail and sensitive art against the juggernaut of classic Hollywood on suicidally level ground.

The Whitney's arrangements of things from the nineteen-twenties (“Jazz Age America”) and thirties (“America in Crisis”) endorse romantic vogues: nature-mystifying as in Georgia O'Keeffe, industry-idolizing as in Charles Sheeler, folkmongering as in Thomas Hart Benton, proletariat-vanguarding as in Ben Shahn. These emotional fantasies feel pathetic. They presume that the chronic isolation of creative individuals can be redeemed by good-will gestures toward the common people. I am reminded of the Great American Joke, which is administered to everyone in childhood: Lone Ranger and Tonto surrounded by hostile Indians. Lone Ranger says, “Well, it looks like curtains for us, Tonto.” Tonto says, “What you mean ‘*us*,’ white man?” In America, one speaks for oneself—in the never certain case that one has a self to speak for and that anyone will be impressed.

For greatest American artist of the first half of the twentieth century, I nominate Arshile Gorky, who puts in a perfunctory appearance at the end of the show. He counted for the most in the most tragic way. A traumatized and manic Armenian immigrant, Gorky took up the cause of modern painting (from the top, with Picasso) as if his life depended on it. He developed drenchingly songful modes of abstracted thicknesses and thinnesses, which he taught Willem de Kooning. He conveyed the possibility of local world-class painting to all the fledgling Abstract Expressionists. He made works that give and give, feeding himself into them as if into flames. After a Job-like siege of personal misfortunes, he scrawled “Goodbye My Loveds” on a crate and hanged himself in his studio in 1948. I can imagine nothing finer and more terrible than to feel like a Loved of Arshile Gorky.

By corralling miscellaneous American art in a form that is typical of our culture at its most overbearing—the blockbuster exhibition—the Whitney has caught itself in a bind. It's as if a box of chocolates were delivered on the back of an elephant. How likely is it that the recipient will devote undivided attention to the candy? This blundering beast of a show is, finally, viewer-proof. It comes across as so thrilled with itself that one's own little opinions are irrelevant—if one could muster enough concentration to form opinions amid the ambient, canned razzmatazz. We are left with a pretty good demonstration of what art, like the suffering individual soul, is always up against in America. ◆

THE CURRENT CINEMA

BOTTOM'S UP

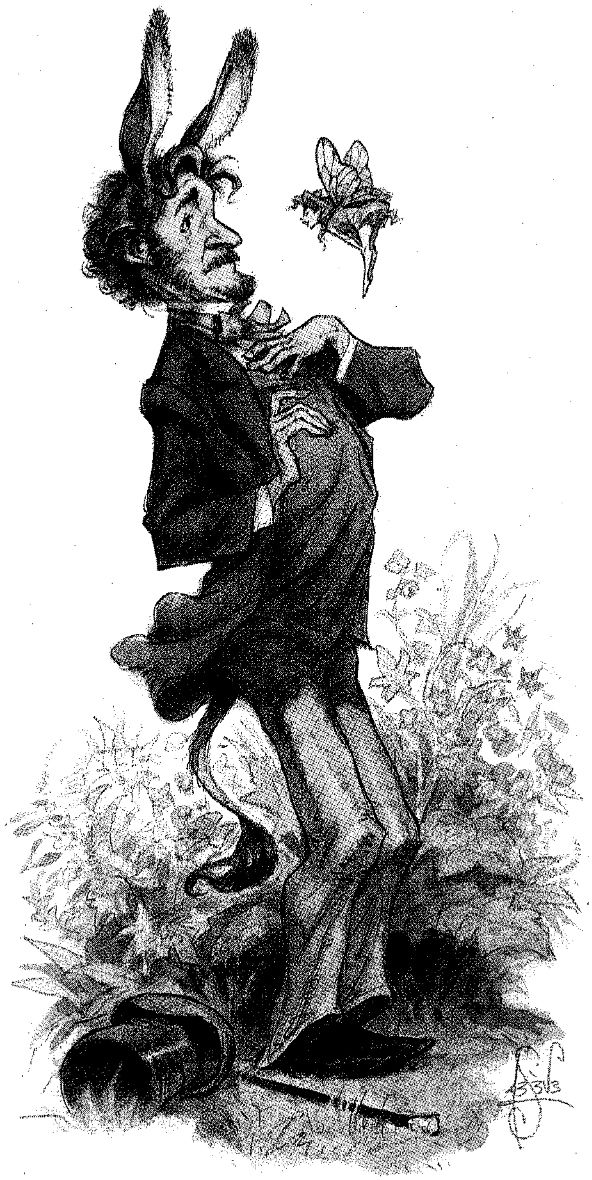
Dreaming with the English playwrights, from Shakespeare to Rattigan.

BY DAVID DENBY

In “Soapdish,” a rowdy slapstick farce from 1991, Sally Field grew so impatient with Kevin Kline's endlessly shifting masks (Kline played a hack actor) that she finally demanded he speak in his “real voice.” But Kline couldn't do it, and the reason, of course, was that Kevin Kline has no real voice. At least, not in movies. What he has is a dozen or more different voices, high and low, accented and plain, roaring and squelched. Exercising his multistopped instrument, Kline was very funny in “Soapdish.” He played an actor stuck in a Florida dinner-theatre production of “Death of a Salesman.” When he was asked to appear in a well-paying soap opera, and was informed that his character—a doctor—had been “studying in Vienna,” Kline ran his hand through his hair in grave enjoyment of actorly rumination. “I like it . . . he's seen things in Europe . . . European things,” he said. Kline is a master of fatuous vanity, of short-lived glee and exasperated outrage. He parodies vainglorious illusion and romantic ardor (that John Gilbert mustache doesn't hurt); then he deflates himself with the forced rush of a child's balloon.

Kline does many things well, yet in movies he's an acclaimed performer but not quite a star. To become a movie star, an actor needs a certain density, a stubborn, immovable mass of being that an audience can rely on. The quality I'm thinking of has nothing to do with size, weight, or tempo. The bantam cock James Cagney had that density, and so did Spencer Tracy and William Holden, and now Harrison Ford and Anthony Hopkins have it. We know who those men are; we know who the convulsive Jim Carrey is, too, and even that plaintive, overgrown Jewish boy Adam Sandler. But Kevin Kline is a fluent and intelligent performer who has become no one in particular. In comedy, Kline has at times exhibited so quicksilvery and airborne a style that he appears manic, uncentered. And when he turns serious and quiet, in such films as "Grand Canyon" or "The Ice Storm," he goes flat: he can't find a firm base to stand on. Whatever else he is, Kline is too virtuosic to succeed as a rock.

He's best when he plays exactly what he is—an actor with a changeable self. I can't imagine anyone's doing better than he did in "In and Out" with the part of the schoolteacher, a man who, willy-nilly, had made himself a kind of actor—a homosexual pretending to himself and the world that he was a heterosexual. When Kline broke into his rump-thrusting disco strut, he made the audience giddy. And he will make the audience giddy again in the new production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," adapted and directed by the same Michael Hoffman who made "Soapdish." The role of Nick Bottom, the weaver and amateur actor, allows Kline's talents to exfoliate into the richest comic work he's done yet. When the players gather, early on, and Bottom shows off with a bit of rant ("The raging rocks / And shivering shocks"), Kline is grandiloquent and preening, his eyes afire, his head thrown back. He seems to be parodying styles of theatrical flamboyance which no longer exist—bits of legendary hamming, perhaps, from nineteenth-century road companies. Of course, his Bottom has other registers as well. In the Magic Forest, when Bottom, "translated," wears an ass's head (in this case, hairy makeup, which allows Kline's face to be seen), Kline uses a rounded, glutinous voice from the back of his mouth which is the essence of asshood—self-satisfied, almost gurgling. Sprinkled with love juice, Titania (Michelle Pfeiffer), the queen of the fairy world, stares at him in adoration, and he's caught between disbelief and obscene relish of her folly. Pfeiffer breathes through her lines, and now and then, hearing only aspirated syllables, we lose the meaning of what she's saying, but she's certainly a golden vision, and Kline, chest hair aroused, donkey teeth protruding, luxuriates gloriously in her arms.

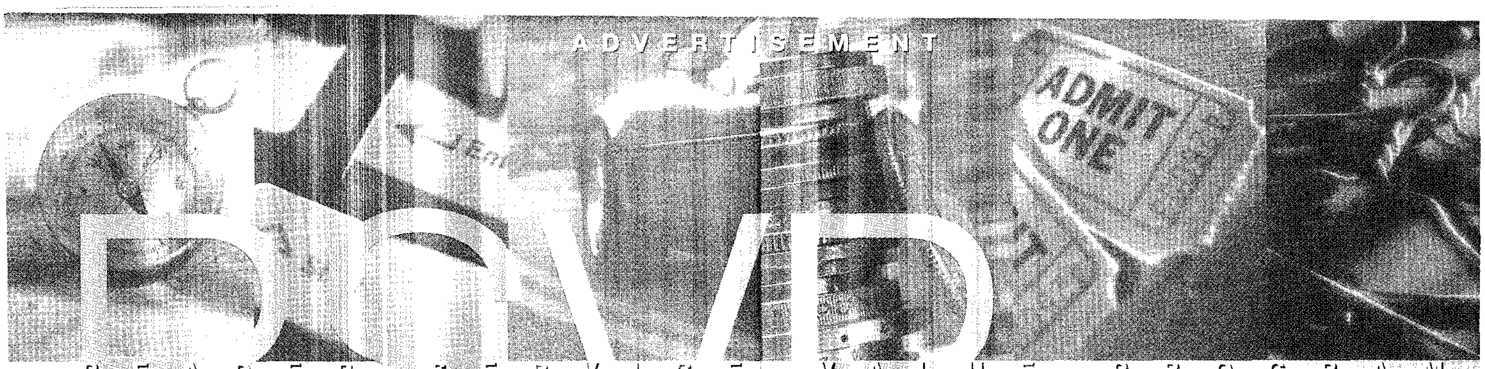


The essence of asshood: Kevin Kline is grandiloquent and preening, self-satisfied and gurgling, as Bottom in Michael Hoffman's "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

PETER DE SÈVE

There are other talented performers in the movie (David Strathairn is a fine, businesslike Duke), but without Kline this "Midsummer Night" would have been hard to endure. Hoffman, who also directed "Restoration" and "One Fine Day," has transferred the setting from Shakespeare's ancient, myth-haunted Athens to the Tuscany of 1900. The light is dazzling, the production lavish and busy. Servants bustle about; tradesmen, in town, sell their wares. But what is the purpose of all this movement? Hoffman's touch is strenuous but unimaginative. The soundtrack is drenched in Italian opera, music too openly emotional for the delicate madness of this play; Mendelssohn's famous score shows up but gets pulled apart and reordered so that its exquisite sections no longer flow into one another. In general, Hoffman has a weakness for schlock excess, and he doesn't bring much rhythm, or even momentum, to the material. The young lovers (Calista Flockhart and Christian Bale; Anna Friel and Dominic West) chase one another furiously through the woods on bicycles, but the camera stays largely still, and eventually the actors stop pedalling and fall to the ground. Created on interior sets at Cinecittà, the forest has that overabundance of bush, tree, and mud that so often makes fake woods oppressive. The entire production is neo-Victorian in its clutter. Too many damn fairies lie about, glistening in the dark, and for a while I caught myself thinking that the play was really a bit of a bore (an impression quickly overturned when I went home and read it again).

I suppose Michael Hoffman wanted



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ANSWERS TO 8x10 CRYPTIC NO. 87

ACROSS

1 G(A)IN
4 FILE (2 defs.)
7 NAILED (*Daniel* anag.)
8 AL KALINE (alkaline)
9 T + ELL
11 BIG SHOT (*both GIs* anag.)
13 D(ONE) FOR (*Ford* anag.)
17 A + FAR(e)
19 P + OSTMARK
20 ENDEAR (*earned* anag.)
21 S + E + W + N
22 A + SHY

DOWN

1 G-RATED (grated)
2 ABLE (*Elba* rev.)
3 INK + LING(o)
4 F + ILLS
5 LENT + O
6 EDEN (hidden)
10 SHOFARS (*chauffeurs* hom.)
12 TUR(n)KEY
14 O + ZONE
15 EATEN (hidden in second letters)
16 (t)APES
18 ARCH (2 defs.)

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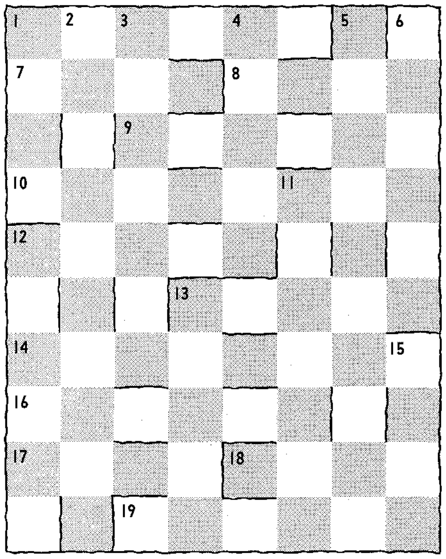
For more information, log on to www.newyorkerreaderlink.com to work in Italy because a looser, earthier setting would justify the removal of as many garments as possible. The men wind up with pieces of cloth barely hanging around their midriffs; the young actresses, unclothed, wear their hair long, tresses covering their dainties, as in risqué restaurant murals from long ago. I have nothing against eroticizing Shakespeare (if "Shakespeare in Love" did nothing else, it accomplished that feat forever), but the effect here is coy and decorative rather than sexual, and Hoffman will never live down a scene in which the two half-naked actresses wrestle in a mud pond. What holds us to the movie is Kevin Kline's passion for performing. His reflection on Bottom's dream is as moving as anything he's ever done onscreen, and he dominates the great scene at the end—Hoffman's finest achievement here—in which the amateur players finally put on their pathetic "Pyramus and Thisby," foolishly explaining what doesn't need to be explained, and the aristocrats, too touched to engage in outright mockery, embroider the players' efforts with the gentlest raillery.

DAVID MAMET has adapted and directed "The Winslow Boy," the 1946 Terence Rattigan play, with a fidelity so profound that one doesn't know whether to be amazed or depressed by it. Rattigan's play was based on a true story. In 1908, a thirteen-year-old boy was expelled from a British naval academy on the ground that he had forged a friend's signature on a five-shilling postal order and had then cashed the order. The cadet's father, a Bristol bank agent, believed his son to be innocent and emptied the family coffers in an effort to clear the boy's name. In Mamet's movie, as in the play, the question of the boy's guilt or innocence is ignored, and the public agitation surrounding the case gets reduced to an offstage rumble; Mamet, again following the play, avoids the courtroom duels that Rattigan himself wrote into the first movie version of the material (from 1948, directed by Anthony Asquith). What's left? Both the play and Mamet's movie concentrate on the intense self-control of the boy's upper-middle-class family as they pass in and out of innumerable doorways in their Edwardian house. Every scene is a tense struggle between anger and reticence. The dramatic method is so fussy and oblique that at the climax of the movie the resolution of the Winslow case is announced by the maid; interest then shifts to the tepid reception of the news by the father, Arthur Winslow (Nigel Hawthorne), and the boy's sister, Catherine (Rebecca Pidgeon). Their response, we realize, is tepid because neither of them can possibly betray emotion in front of a servant. But by then we have long since realized that the point of Mamet's movie is to celebrate such dramatic oddities.

An enormous reserve caging an enormous will; hostility and love bound by stiff propriety; a refusal of rhetoric and memorable statement and an embrace, instead, of precise phrasing of only those emotions (honor, pride, loneliness, remorse) that lend themselves to precise phrasing—by the nineteen-fifties, Terence Rattigan's playwriting manner had become something of a joke. To my ears, it remains a joke, or at least an anomaly. British reserve may be daunting, but to treat it as a superb moral achievement when it is clearly no more than a proud period style is to be willfully blind. Has it not occurred to Mamet that public emotion was forbidden to the rulers of an imperial power because such people could not afford to express weakness before those they ruled? Perhaps not. The Empire may have found its final celebrant in a tart American playwright famous for his own form of imperious withholding. "The Winslow Boy" is skillful and absorbing (Jeremy Northam makes a fine frozen-up barrister), but the movie, as much as the Winslows' manner, appears to have been something created to overawe the servants. ♦

8 x 10 CRYPTIC

NO. 88 BY MONIKA ZOOK



ACROSS

- 1 Physicist who found a constant support in the audience (6)
- 7 Lasso deer, snaring Prancer's head (4)
- 8 Melville novel: Ring Low (4)
- 9 Riding pig in commercial (6)
- 10 Blow up English school, interrupting appointment (8)
- 12 One immersed in troubles for so long (5)
- 13 Position opens for unskilled workers (5)
- 14 Engineer drove bus to get sounds added to films (8)
- 16 Keep Mom in check (6)
- 17 Old tragedy, in part (4)
- 18 Cheese manufactured the wrong way (4)
- 19 Rodent eats piece of Stilton for dessert (6)

DOWN

- 1 Carelessly drop spur (4)
- 2 Playwright ran over Eve and Georgia (4,2,4)
- 3 Pronounced craving for rock (7)
- 4 Nocturnal critters with stings going around circle (5)
- 5 "Hamlet" character in favor of metal underwear (10)
- 6 Computer devices for Missouri Democrats (6)
- 11 Leap in like swarms (7)
- 12 Not knowing right from wrong in morning exam (6)
- 13 Arp uplifted party in Spanish museum (5)
- 15 A number in addition announced (4)

• •

The solution to puzzle No. 87 appears on page 98. For a free copy of "The New Yorker's Guide to Solving Cryptic Crosswords," please send your fax number or a stamped, self-addressed envelope to "Solvers' Guide," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. For an electronic version, send an E-mail to puzzleguide@newyorker.com.

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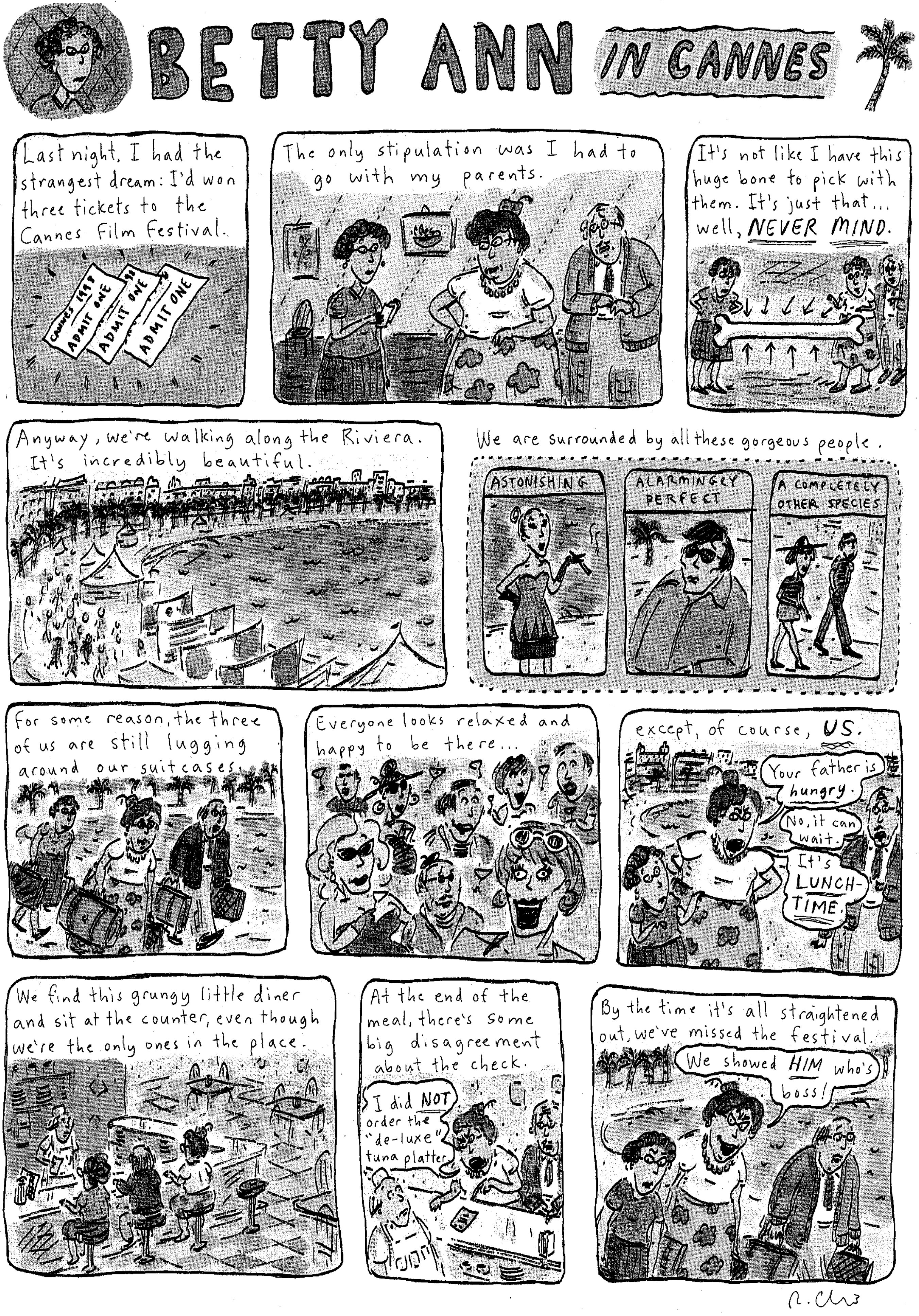
BETTY ANN IN CANNES
Last night, I had the strangest dream: I'd won three tickets to the Cannes Film Festival.
CANNES 1999 ADMIT ONE
ADMIT ONE
ADMIT ONE
The only stipulation was I had to go with my parents.
It's not like I have this huge bone to pick with them. It's just that... well, NEVER MIND.
Anyway, we're walking along the Riviera. It's incredibly beautiful.
We are surrounded by all these gorgeous people.
ASTONISHING
ALARMINGLY PERFECT
A COMPLETELY OTHER SPECIES
For some reason, the three of us are still lugging around our suitcases.
Everyone looks relaxed and happy to be there...
except, of course, US.
Your father is hungry.
No, it can wait.
It's LUNCH-TIME.
We find this grungy little diner and sit at the counter, even though we're the only ones in the place.
At the end of the meal, there's some big disagreement about the check.
I did NOT order the "de-luxe" tuna platter.
By the time it's all straightened out, we've missed the festival.
We showed HIM who's boss!

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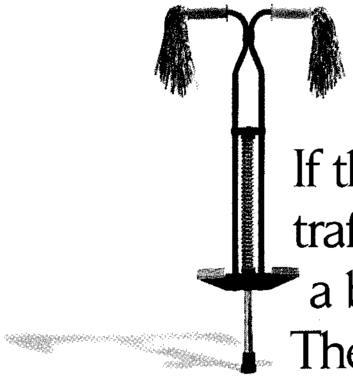

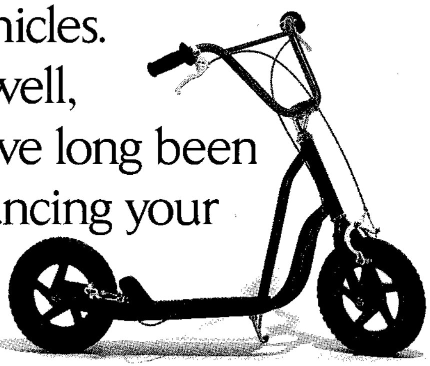

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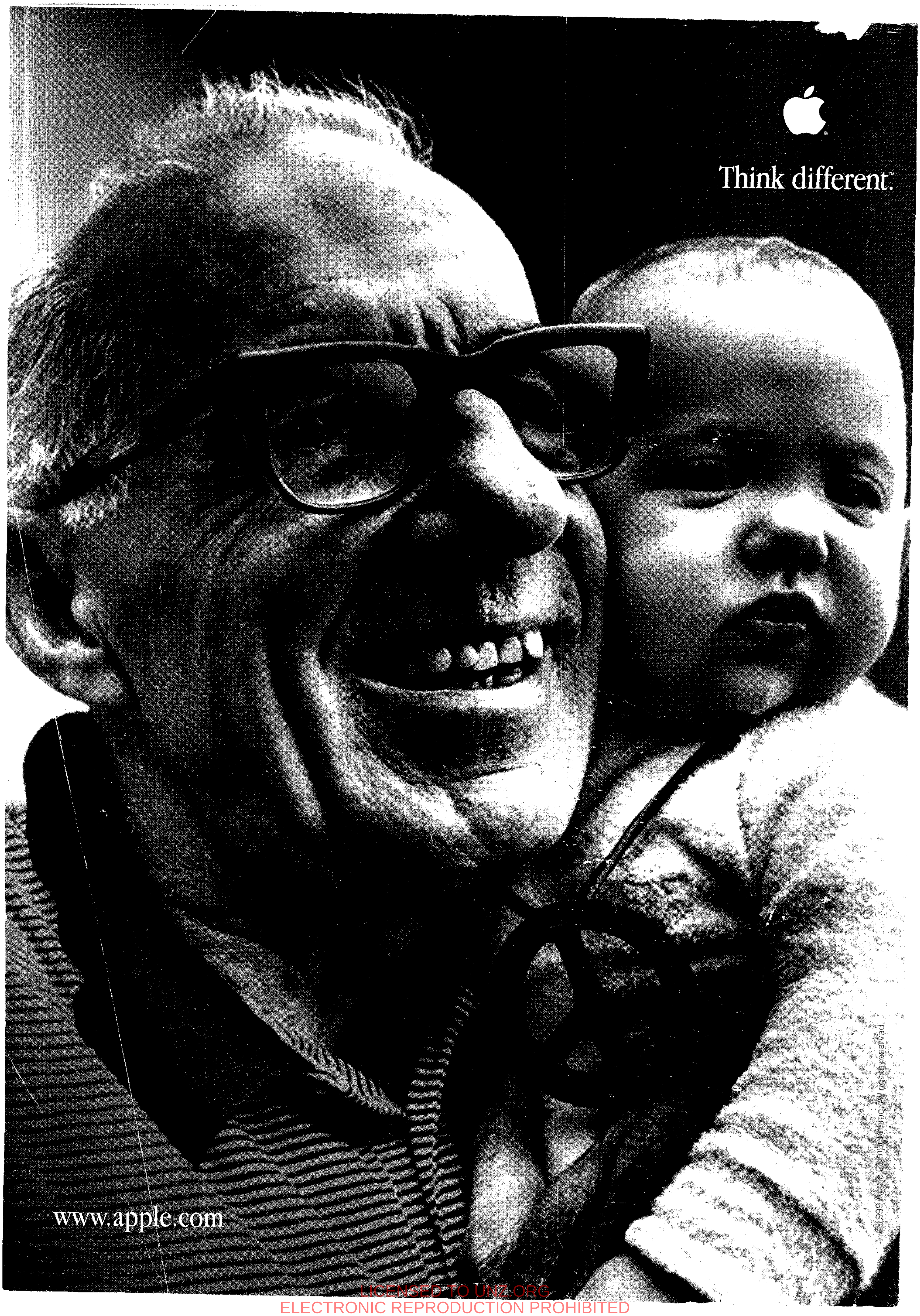
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